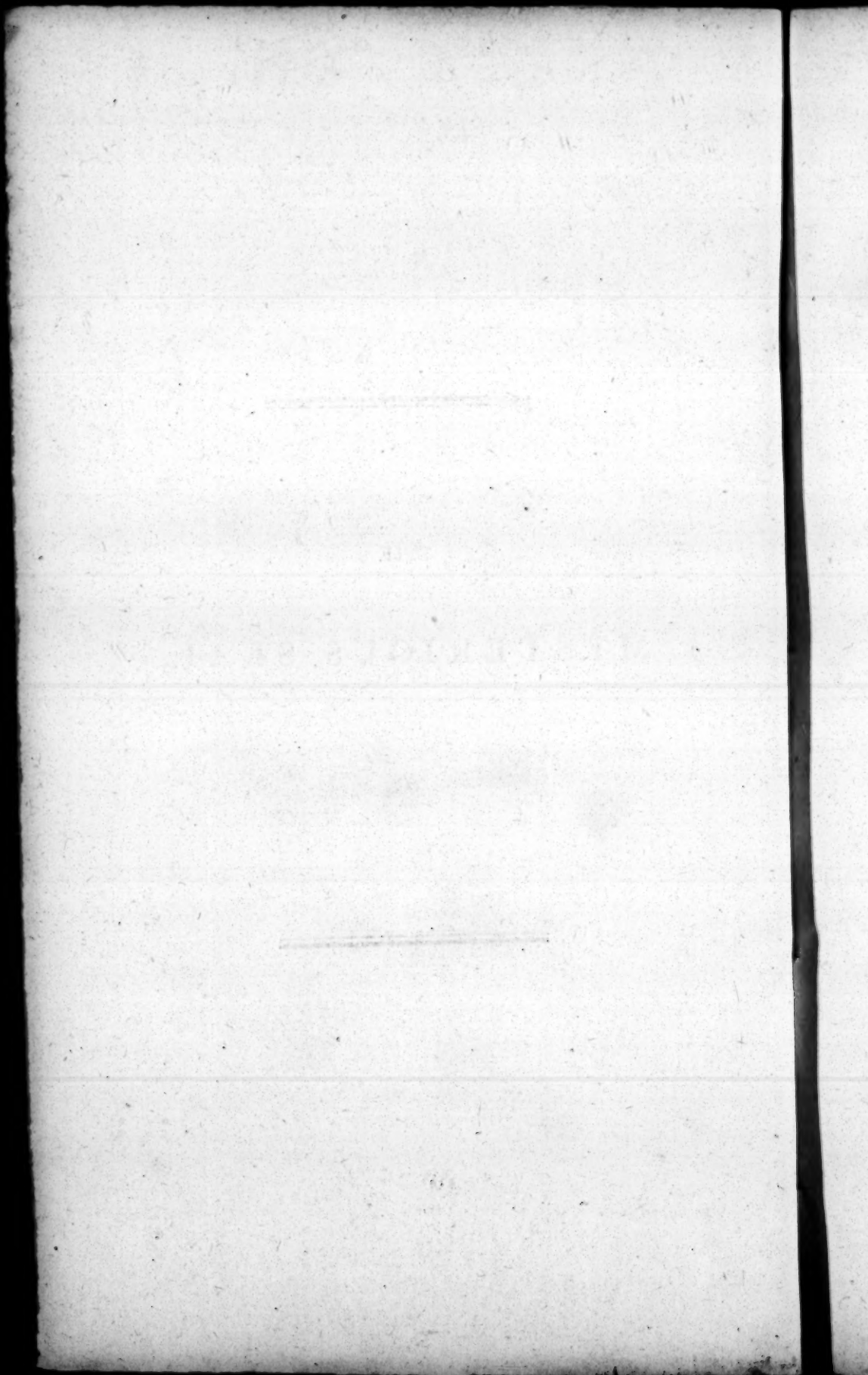


C.171.a.9.

THE
MYSTERIOUS SEAL,
A ROMANCE.



THE
MYSTERIOUS SEAL,
A
ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By W. C. PROBY.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR R. H. WESTLEY, N^o. 159, OPPOSITE
THE NEW CHURCH, IN THE STRAND.

1799.

THE
MYSTERIOUS SEAL

ROMANCE

IN THREE VOLUMES

BY W. C. FORD

VOLUME II

LONDON

PRINTED BY T. W. LESTER, No. 150, OPPOSITE
THE NEW GALLERY IN THE STRAND.

1895

THE
MYSTERIOUS SEAL.

A
ROMANCE.

CHAP. I.

IT is now time to return to the castle, and review the transactions that had passed within its walls, exclusive of that in which Conrad had been a principal and an unfortunate actor, from the period when Matilda retired to her apartment, anxiously expecting the hour that was to witness her deliverance from captivity. In walking from the breakfast-

VOL. II,

B

room

room to her own chamber, she happened to take her handkerchief from her pocket, and unconsciously pulled out along with it the note conveyed to her by Conrad, which without her knowledge, dropt upon the floor. Shortly after Marianne being a little indisposed, quitted the apartment where her companions were engaged in conversation, and proceeding through the passage, perceived the note which had been accidentally left there by Matilda: having taken it from the ground she soon discovered the contents, but was unable to ascertain for whom the note had been intended, as no name was visible, and it might have been dropt either by Matilda, or one of those now in the breakfast-room. Marianne repaired to her chamber, which was on the lower floor, and revolving in her mind the information and instructions contained in the
note,

note, perceived in them the means of facilitating her own escape from a captivity she detested, and a tyrant she loathed and despised.

Her father was a peasant upon the estate of the Baron, and Jaques who had just before entered into his service, having accidentally seen her, when she was about twelve years of age, at a period when to the most captivating beauty, she added a delicate shape and elegant form, pourtrayed her charms to his master in such fascinating colours, that the latter gave him a carte blanche to make use of every means he thought likely to succeed in obtaining her for him, from her parents. The obsequious servant, thinking an offer of money the most likely to the attainment of his object, made a liberal proposal to her father, who tempted by the magnitude of the sum, sacrificed

parental duty to sordid gain, and basely struck a bargain for the sale of his daughter to the Baron de Umfreville, in consideration of the gold that Jaques had agreed to pay him. The agreement was imparted to the mother; but maternal affection was not to be so easily stifled in her bosom, she stamped, and raved and cried at what she denominated the baseness, and the wickedness of the act, but the father was an absolute tyrant, and his wife was compelled to obey.

Marianne was conveyed by her parents to the castle of Umfreville, which was now to become her prison, about the time when the daughter of the Baron was stolen. Here she was educated expressly for the purposes of her haughty and libidinous master, and had remained ever since a prisoner in the East Tower of his mansion, bereft of all hope of deliverance.

liverance. The unnatural conduct of her parents had completely alienated her affections, and thus she felt not the least desire to go in search of them, after her escape, even had there been no danger of her being discovered at their residence, where she would most likely be sought on her flight being perceived. Had she however, instituted an enquiry concerning them, it would have proved fruitless, as they left that part of the country almost immediately after the event of her conveyance to the castle, and had not since been heard of.

Though educated for the purposes of voluptuous sensuality, and remaining for more than eighteen years a submissive slave to the passions of the Baron, she still ardently desired once more to breathe the air of liberty; and whilst the love of chastity and honour was extinct in her

bosom, a repugnance to the tyranny of which she had been so long a victim, was continually present to her mind, and she now eagerly seized the opportunity of escape, which had so unexpectedly offered itself. Returning to the room, where her companions in captivity were still assembled, she pleaded extreme indisposition, and signifying her determination of retiring to her apartment, for the purpose of obtaining sleep, which she thought likely to relieve her, immediately repaired thither. Anxiously listening, she at length heard footsteps ascending the stairs without, and locking the door of her apartment, and conveying the key into her pocket, as directed by the note, she immediately proceeded to that leading to the subterranean apartments, and was soon in the arms of Conrad.

In

In the mean time Arthur de Umfreville reflecting upon what was now become his darling object, the deliverance of Matilda, or rather the change of one prison for another, which was all he designed her, revolved in his mind the situation of the subterranean passages he had explored in company with Conrad, and now recollected and lamented that the latter was in possession of the keys which had succeeded in opening all the doors that were now in the way, but possessing a large assortment, he did not doubt he might still be able to proceed alone through the passages and private door, but that leading to the East Tower remained an obstacle, on account of the bolts which fastened it within; but considering their situation, he thought it possible to cut them through with little noise, and thus remove the only impe-

diment that remained : but a bar to his views was still left behind, which could not be removed with so little difficulty ; this was the ignorance of Matilda relative to the efforts that were making for her release. To advance into the tower after cutting the bolts, and unlocking the door, would be pregnant with danger to himself, and doubtful in its tendency towards effecting his object. At length, wearied by the consideration of fruitless plans, he determined again to explore the subterranean passages, and try again to open the locks of those doors himself and Conrad had relocked, which were only the private one, that which led to the dungeons from the body of the castle, and that at the farther end leading to the East Tower ; thus making the way thither clear, and removing all obstacles to the execution of any plan he might endeavour to carry into

into effect for the purpose of rescuing Matilda. At this moment it darted across his mind, that having deceived his father into a belief of his joining in the general opinion relative to Matilda's death, no suspicion of his intentions would enter into the mind of the Baron; and by relating a plausible tale he might obtain those keys which the latter constantly kept in his own custody, and which were the only keys that had ever been made to these subterraneous doors. Thus he would be enabled to check any pursuit which might be commenced in the dungeons, and before his father could resolve on any plan of external pursuit, embarrassed as he necessarily must be from the circumstances in which he was placed relative to Matilda, he would be enabled in the meantime to convey her to some place of concealment entirely out of his reach.

B 5

Delighted

Delighted with the thought, he immediately repaired to the Baron, and said,
“ I am convinced, my Lord, of the secret
“ machinations of the Baron de Monta-
“ cute, though I am at present unable to
“ develope them, and only certain of their
“ being directed against your peace. I am
“ constantly upon the watch to discover
“ his intentions, and I am sure of defeat-
“ ing him, if he dares to array his forces
“ in an hostile manner against your power.
“ I think, however, the mildest punish-
“ ment you can inflict upon the prisoners,
“ whom it is highly probable will be taken
“ by your retainers, for that perfidy of
“ which they are the willing instruments,
“ is imprisonment in the dungeons below.
“ If you will grant me the keys of those
“ subterraneous habitations, I will make
“ them ready for their use.” The Baron
was highly delighted at seeing his son thus
take

take the labouring oar and relieve him from all the weight of business and of care; and acquiescing in his sentiments relative to the confinement of his enemies, tho' he thought it by far too mild a punishment, whilst he had not the least suspicion of his intention, immediately gave him the keys, reserving to himself those appertaining to the dungeons and passages beneath the East Tower, which it was impossible for him to know or suspect had been recently explored; and likewise that belonging to the private door, which Arthur did not ask for, in order to avoid incurring the least semblance of suspicion.

Thus in possession of the only keys that really belonged to those places he was about once more to traverse; he repaired thither, after partaking of a slight repast, taking with him a number of those belonging to himself. Having tried the lock of

the private door, and particularly remarked the key that opened it, he proceeded into the dungeons. When he had arrived in the second large passage his foot slipped, and the lantern which he held, falling from his hand upon the ground, it was broken and the light became extinguished. Terrified at the darkness in which he was involved, he hesitated whether he should proceed forward, or return in search of another light, but being well acquainted with all the passages leading to the East Tower, at length, taking courage, he determined to proceed, and began cautiously to grope his way along them. His footsteps in this progress were those which were first heard by Conrad and the affrighted Marianne. Arriving at the door which led to the apartments in the East Tower, he groped about for a considerable time; and at length, discovering the lock, he listened

listened for some minutes, until, judging by the sound, that the inhabitants of the place were assembled in the upper apartments, he tried several keys and at length found one which turned the lock; but what was his surprise, when, without any resistance, the door opened, and a female silently precipitated herself into his arms. Astonished at so unexpected an incident, and ignorant whether it was Matilda whom he held, he became motionless with surprise; and, losing his presence of mind, forgot to relock the door. Descending the steps, he led her with all the caution the darkness of the place required, through the passages of the East Tower, across that, at the farther end of which sat Conrad and Marianne, (the latter having fainted, and the former in the greatest degree of agitation,) and from thence into the next parallel passage. In the furthest

most

most dungeon of this he determined to take refuge with his fair companion, it being opposite to the short passage, into which, in case of danger, he might instantly precipitate himself, and make his escape. He immediately led her into this dismal apartment, whilst the strangeness of the incident so wholly occupied his mind, that he forgot to lock the doors he had passed; which, when fastened, would have prevented any one from the East Tower from arriving at the spot where, for a short time, he had taken up his abode, whilst he possessed the only key that could enable any one to enter at the other door, except that possessed by Conrad; and it was in the highest degree improbable that he should now make any attempt to traverse the dungeons. In sitting down they accidentally moved some chains remaining there, and the clanking of these were what
had

had been fearfully heard by Conrad; whilst Arthur scarcely dared to speak for fear of being himself discovered and involved in the greatest dangers, and whispered his companion to be perfectly silent.

He began now seriously to reflect upon the situation in which chance had placed him; and having brought with him no disguise either for himself, or a companion, whom he little expected to meet with, and who might or might not be Matilda, was at a loss how to proceed. To endeavour now to escape with her by the private door would be an hazardous attempt, and not likely to succeed; to continue there till night would probably excite suspicions in the breast of the Baron, and an enquiry might be instituted, leading to an unpleasant discovery. In this perplexity he remained, whilst, at intervals,

vals, he thought he heard some one breathing, and once a whisper, which created the utmost terror in his mind; and having early been told of the apparitions that haunted the West Tower, his mind was now impressed with the belief that what he heard was the effect of some supernatural cause, and he did not dare to stir from the position he had taken.

The fair one now by his side was actually Matilda. Not possessing the advantage which Marianne had, in being only a short distance from the door of deliverance, she anxiously waited rather beyond the hour at which dinner began, afraid of some one crossing her in the passage, and discovering her intent. They had summoned her to dinner, but she pleaded extreme indisposition, and begged to be excused from complying with their request. At length, quitting the room, the door
of

of which she carefully locked, and taking with her the key, she descended to the door from whence her escape was to commence, and was extremely surpris'd to find it already unbolted. She waited for some time in the most anxious suspense; but nothing was to be heard; at length, she distinguished the sound of a footstep ascending the stairs. The heart of Matilda palpitated with violent emotion; her whole frame trembled, and scarcely could she support herself when the door opened, and she flew into the arms of him whom she doubted not, was her beloved Conrad. The darkness rather intimidated her, but the prospect of escape, and the fancied protection of the Lord of her affections, enlivened the gloom, and she proceeded into the dungeon with tolerable cheerfulness. The silence imposed upon her by Arthur she thought highly necessary.

fary, and hesitated not to preserve. The breathing and whispering which she likewise had heard considerably alarmed her with the fear of discovery, but she was still silent; and, trusting to the foresight and talents of Conrad, looked forward with joyful expectation to the event of her escape from the prison, into which she had been so villainously entrapped.

The Baron in the interval, having waited for the effect of the letter which he had given to Matilda, and which he doubted not would extinguish in her mind all hope of escape, was now anxious to know whether the hopelessness of her captivity had made any impression upon her mind favourable to his views. He sent a female who was with him to summon Matilda to his presence; who, finding the door of her apartment locked, and receiving no answer to her knock, enquired of the others^s
assembled

assembled in the common room, and was informed of her indisposition. With this answer she returned to the Baron, conjecturing that Matilda was asleep. Satisfied with it for the present, he waited a considerable time, though with much impatience, frequently sending the above-mentioned female to knock and listen at the door. Until at length, becoming suspicious, he went himself to her apartment, when, finding the door locked, and being unable to hear her, he began to be much alarmed, and concluded she had destroyed herself in despair. Fraught with this idea, he immediately determined to break open the door; which, with the assistance of several of the females, he effected; and now fully expecting to find a lifeless corpse instead of the lovely and blooming Matilda, entered with a considerable degree of terror, and could scarcely believe the evidence

dence of his sight, when it too plainly appeared she was not in the chamber. He anxiously searched the room, but it was absolutely impossible she could have escaped by any opening there; and still thinking her deliverance from imprisonment an impossibility, he now concluded she had concealed herself in some other apartment, and immediately avowed his intention of searching every chamber in the Tower. Having looked into those on the same floor without success, he proceeded to the staircase, and having placed two females at the door he quitted, to prevent her returning from any apartment above without being discovered, he descended the stairs, accompanied by two others, and minutely examined the chambers situated on the lower floor, except that belonging to Marianne, which being locked,

locked, and having heard from the females who attended him the tale of her illness, he did not attempt to force the door. Unable, however, to discover the place of Matilda's concealment, he now thought her concealed by Marianne in the apartment of the latter, and immediately determined to enter it by force, for the purpose of searching for her; when, accidentally advancing into the passage where the door leading to the dungeons beneath was placed, one of his female attendants observed the bolts were pushed back, and the door unlocked; on mentioning this to the Baron, he advanced to examine it with a large portion of alarm and surprise. The most gloomy suspicions now occupied his imagination; he fancied himself betrayed, and scarcely dared to look around, afraid of being assassinated by the very females who stood obsequiously

obsequiously submissive at his side. All confidence fled from his mind, and he remained for some time in a stupor which his attendants mistook for reflection upon the incident that had so unexpectedly occurred. At length recovering a little from the terror in which he had been involved, he retained sufficient presence of mind to bolt again the door, for the purpose of preventing any entry from without; and reascending the stairs with his attendants, he took care to fasten that leading from the upper to the lower apartments with a spring known to no one but himself, by which means the escape of his remaining prisoners would be effectually prevented.

Retiring now to his own apartment he became a prey to the most gloomy suspicion and blackest melancholy. He doubted not that she had escaped by the
dungeon

dungeon door, and the recollection of his son's borrowing the keys rushed in full force upon his mind. Doubtless some deep laid plot, in which his son acted the part of a principal conspirator, was on the point of being carried into execution, perhaps already effected, and himself, deprived of his wealth and his power, about to become a prisoner in some dungeon that extended its murky darkness beneath the Castle of his inheritance; whilst his son lorded it over his household, and usurped his domains. His terrific fear increased with thickening horrors from the uncertainty and suspense which hovered over him, and he hardly dared to summon a domestic to his presence, for fear of meeting with an assassin instead of a servant.

At length the necessity of taking some step presented itself forcibly to his mind,
his

—his son and Matilda had doubtless concerted together their scheme,—his most secret concealments were discovered, and all his villainy laid open to the face of day. Ample time had been allowed for an escape through the dungeons, and now perhaps they were swaying his household with potent spell, and taking effectual means to transfer to his heir his power and his consequence.

But it might be, they were yet in some subterraneous apartment, detained by accident, or waiting for a favourable opportunity of flight, and his domestics still ignorant of what had been transacting. It was possible, and the darkened gloom of his mind became in some measure dispelled. Resuming his courage, he arose for the purpose of summoning a domestic to his presence, but again attacked by fearful forebodings, he hesitated;—he was now
perhaps

perhaps himself a prisoner, bereft of every means of escape, and the conspirators in possession of the subterraneous passages, as well as the common staircase; whilst, instead of a servant, he should witness the entry of an armed band, resolutely bent upon his destruction. An universal tremor seized him,—a cold sweat exuded from every pore, and already, in fancy, he heard them forcibly rushing through the apartments towards that where he was seated.

Again, the possibility of safety, and of his son and Matilda being yet in the dungeons returned; and once more re-suming courage, he rang for a domestic, but, trembling for his life, ran to the door, and keeping it half open whilst himself remained on the other side, from whence, in the event of danger, he might easily escape, after secretly fastening it,

into the East Tower, and, before they could force a passage, effect a flight from the scene of danger. But, perhaps, his mistresses were conspiring against him, in league with the conspirators without, and he should only fly to their apartment to meet with death in another form.

Thus insulated, and not knowing a single being in whom he could place confidence, the haughty Lord of the domains of Umfreville abjectly stood a prey to all the accumulated horrors of fear and remorse. No domestic appeared, and his mind was plunged into despair; they were discussing in what manner they should murder him; and seizing his dagger he determined at the approach of his assassins to plunge it into his breast. But his fate must soon be determined, and, ringing more violently, one of his domestics at length appeared, and the Baron, hardly

hardly daring to hope for obedience, ordered him to summon Pierre, who was now the superintendant of his household instead of the disgraced Jaques, immediately to his presence; the servant submissively retired, and the fear of the Baron became a little lessened.

Pierre instantly appeared before him with his accustomed obsequiousness, and the Baron still standing with the door half open, but with more confidence, though still suspicious of harm, thus delivered his commands; "Let no one
" pass either into or out of the castle
" without my express permission, and
" inform me of all who make the at-
" tempt; let a strict watch be kept day
" and night, and your life shall answer
" for your negligence." The agitation and fright in which the Baron had been involved left traces of their effects which

were still visible upon his countenance, and the earnestness with which he uttered his orders, added to the manner in which he stood, whilst expressing himself, all contributed to impress fear upon the mind of his obsequious servant, and made him tremble at the sounds he heard. The Baron saw him hesitate, and his alarm was renewed; with a tremulous but powerful voice he called to his frightened domestic: "Delay not the execution of my commands." This operated upon Pierre like an electric shock; he instantly withdrew, and whilst his retreat relieved the Baron from a portion of his anxious terror, the former became the sport of alarming apprehension. The agitated manner of his master, and the fear evidently portrayed in his countenance, must have arisen from the discovery of some dark conspiracy—some
inimical

inimical attempt intended to be executed—some plan, perhaps, to set fire to the castle and murder its inhabitants; what could it be else? Potent imagination added new terrors to his conjectures. Arriving at the apartments of the household he detailed the orders he had received with so much real terror depicted in his countenance, and fearfulness in his manner, that every retainer and domestic caught the contagion of alarm, and many were not wanting who already fancied they heard a hostile legion bursting open the castle gates, and saw the tops of the lengthened spears even now appear in hostile array in the surrounding fields; but from the terms of the command there must be treason within the castle, and trembling they contemplated each other, afraid of meeting in a brother domestic with a conspirator and an assassin.

The Baron's commands, however, must be promptly executed, and Pierre, anxious to preserve his master's favour, summoned them all to the gate; the draw-bridge was drawn up—the gates were barricadoed—and a constant watch kept in the watch tower; whilst the armoury was ransacked; and the domestics armed cap-a-pie, under the orders of Pierre as commander in chief, relieved each other in keeping fearful guard at the castle gate. The alarm of the castle's being suddenly put into a state of defence soon spread through the surrounding country, and every one remained in anxious expectation of some portentous event. From the nature of the Baron's orders some traitor was, no doubt, within the walls of the castle, and who could it be? at length fell suspicion pointed out the disconsolate Jaques; he was a disappointed man, and degraded

degraded by his master, doubtless owed him a grudge for the disgrace he had experienced. What more probable than that he should conspire against the Baron for the purpose of having his revenge? Suspicion, whispered from ear to ear, was at length murmured with increasing strength, and gathering a new accession of force from every tongue burst forth with accumulated force upon the devoted head of Jaques. There must be treason somewhere, and he was the scape-goat upon whom all the sins of internal conspiracy were thrown. Jaques was now off guard in his own apartment, and the surmises which had now become the general subject of conversation were related to Pierre; their accumulated force instantly flashed conviction upon his mind, and he said, "not a doubt of it but Jaques is the
"man, let us make him prisoner at

“once.” “Aye,” said Phillis, whom Jaques had unpardonably offended by slighting her love, “and Margaret is as deep in the dirt as he is in the mire, “I dare to say.” The mention of Margaret—the known chere amie of Jaques—had an electrical effect upon the domestics present; not a doubt was hinted by any one relative to her being concerned; he had made her the confidant of his treasonable intentions, and she was equally a conspirator. “Let us imprison “them both,” repeated several voices, “or we sha’n’t be safe in our beds.”

A strong party was immediately dispatched to make a prisoner of Jaques, whilst another equally strong was sent to take into custody the unsuspecting Margaret; the former immediately repaired to the apartment of their intended prisoner, but, terrifying thought! he was not there;

there; the bed and the bedclothes were solicitously searched, and every corner of the room assiduously looked into, but Jaques was not to be found. He had, no doubt, escaped by some private way, and already joined the enemies army marching to storm the castle; terrified at the thought of such an event, they returned to notify to Pierre the ill success of their commission, but the other detachment were before them, they had been more successful, for not only Margaret was taken but Jaques along with her; proof positive, no doubt, of their conspiring together about the means of giving entrance to the enemy.

The astonished Jaques, and the affrighted Margaret, were hurried before Governor Pierre, who, seated upon an elevation in the Great Hall, as soon as they appeared began to interrogate his

trembling prisoners. "So, Jaques," said the majestic Pierre, "you have brought your pigs to a fine market indeed; aye, you may stare; we have proof positive of your guilt, and of yours too, Mrs. Margery, so you need not deny it; we know it all, and you both stand a good chance of being racked upon the wheel, let me tell you for your comfort; or, perhaps, our worthy Lord, in his great mercy, may raise you to high posts, and hang you at once." Margaret began to sob and cry, and supposing, from what she had heard, that Jaques was actually concerned in some plot, sobbed out, "O, Jaques, what have you been doing of?" "Aye, what, indeed!" retorted the elevated Pierre; "What, you pretend to know nothing about it, do you Mrs. Margery? but it is all discovered, and your
"guilt

“guilt is as plain as the nose in your face.”—“O, I’m not guilty of any thing,” said Margaret, sobbing and crying with still greater vehemence; whilst Jaques, at first amazed and unable to account for the incidents that had occurred, at length began to think that he had been arrested in consequence of some calumnious misrepresentation made to the Baron relative to his conduct; and who so likely to be the author of such a calumny as the overbearing Pierre, who was now so haughtily interrogating him, and doubtless for the purpose of removing him from the castle, that the returning favour of the Baron, compassionating his situation, might not eject the former from his elevated superiority. This supposition gathered strength from every circumstance connected with his arrest, and he doubted not that the alarm, which now agitated

the castle, was raised on purpose by the artful Pierre, that he might point out Jaques as a traitor and a conspirator. Fraught with these suspicions, he sullenly refused to give any answer to the insulting interrogatories of Pierre, and demanded to be led into the presence of the Baron. "Into the presence of the Baron," retorted Pierre, "O ho! What you want, I suppose, to confess and save your life, but it's too late, let me tell you, and his Lordship has given me full powers to try you and Mrs. Margaret for your treason." This boast of pretended power was a thunder-stroke to Jaques; he saw himself likely to be innocently condemned, and, perhaps, put to death by his determined enemy, without the least hope of escape; but as a last resource he uttered, with a voice of despair, "I charge you to lead
" me

“me to the Baron, I have discoveries
“to make of the utmost importance.”

Margaret now concluded he was certainly guilty, and, drowned in tears, reproached him with drawing her in as an accomplice. Pierre became in his turn alarmed; the phrase “discoveries of the utmost importance” had a tremendous sound; and implied something dreadful in its meaning. “We’ll lead you to his Lordship immediately,” said Pierre, and, descending from his seat of authority, proceeded forward at the head of an armed detachment, guarding, with the most scrupulous care, the agitated Jaques and the trembling Margaret. Slowly ascending the staircase they advanced through the apartments towards that wherein the Baron was seated. He had been fearfully musing during “the dreadful note
“of preparation” that had gone forth
amongst

amongst his household, upon the plot which he still thought had been formed against his life, involving so many mysterious circumstances, and still conceiving his son to be the prime mover of the conspiracy did not dare to stir from his place, or descend for the purpose of observing the manner in which his commands had been obeyed and carried into execution.

The noise he now heard in the adjoining apartments, of which not the least formidable sound was the clangor of arms, renewed all his terrors of assassination, and, imagining Pierre had only pretended obedience to his orders for the purpose of more effectually betraying him, he again drew his dagger with a considerable degree of trepidation, and precipitately ran to the opposite door, which, holding half open, would afford him the means of
escape

escape before his assailants could effect their purpose. Pierre now triumphantly entered, and was not a little astonished at seeing his master in the same position as when he had uttered his last terrifying commands, but immediately, with exultation, called out, "An please you, my Lord, we have found out the traitor and his accomplice."—"The traitor and his accomplice!" retorted the Baron, and all the real terrors of a conspiracy now darted into his mind: "Who mean you?"—"Here they are, my Lord," said Pierre, "he says he has discoveries to make of great importance; I suppose he wants to peach some more of his accomplices." Jaques and Margaret were at this moment brought in, the latter crying, with renewed sorrow, at the sight of the Baron, whilst the former humbly begged permission to say a few words to his Lordship. It was with no small

small astonishment and affright that the Baron saw his quondam confidant, who had been the means of his obtaining Matilda, and the woman who had been her constant attendant, now brought before him under the denomination of the traitor and his accomplice; a variety of contending sensations agitated his mind, and though relieved from the fear of assassination, he was still the victim of terror. He now imagined that Jaques and Margaret, having discovered the existence of Matilda in the East Tower, had conspired with his son to rescue her from imprisonment, and the latter's obtaining the keys of the dungeons confirmed the supposition; impressed with this idea, he conceived the discoveries promised by Jaques related to Matilda and Arthur. What was he to do? If his villainous depravity, relative to that unhappy maiden, was laid bare to the light, his very domestics would

would detest him, and, viewing his son as her gallant deliverer, would readily join with him in hurling their master from his seat of power. The rest of the household seemed to be ignorant of the matter, and the Baron determined to keep them so, and not permit Jaques to make any disclosure. But what was to be done with him and Margaret? that, the Baron could not finally resolve upon, but determined, as a temporary expedient, to order them into close confinement, and strictly forbid his household from having any communication with them. Fraught with this idea, assuming his usual haughty demeanour, he said, "Let them be separately and closely confined, and debarred from all communication with any one; your lives shall answer for your disobedience." Jaques piteously begged an audience, at the same time solemnly protesting his innocence of any sinister intentions.

intentions against his Lordship; but the Baron considering his protestation as a mere matter of course, and anxiously deprecating those discoveries which he supposed him capable of making, called out with increased vehemence, "Take them away this instant, take them away." The tone of his command allowed not of delay, and Jaques and Margaret, without being permitted to speak another word, being hurried out of the apartment, Pierre commanded the party to halt, and, returning to the Baron, said, "An please your Lordship, they are to be confined in the dungeons, I suppose;" the mention of the dungeons again brought fearful recollections to the mind of the Baron, and agitated his nerves; but recovering himself, he replied, "No; there is no necessity for imprisoning them in the dungeons, let them be confined and carefully guarded in

“in their own respective apartments.” Pierre obsequiously bowed and retired; returning to the party, he said, to the astonished Jaques and Margaret, “I have
“interceded with his Lordship, and in his
“great mercy he has consented to free
“you from the dungeon discipline, and you
“are only to be confined in your apart-
“ments.” Jaques, in whose imagination racks, and wheels, and chains, had stood arranged, in terrific array, was now utterly at a loss to account for the incidents that had occurred; and the pretended intercession of his enemy, Pierre, appeared so highly improbable, that his stock of credulity was not capacious enough to swallow the assertion, and he scarcely deigned sullenly to thank him.

Pierre, with exulting triumph, led on the detachment, bringing along their terrified prisoners, first into the room of Margaret, where having secured the window, and
carefully

carefully searched the room, taking away every instrument of destruction his busy mind could think of, including her bodkin and needles, they deposited the poor girl in the apartment, who, sobbing and crying, with tenfold vehemence, fell on her knees, and piteously implored their compassion, whilst Jaques himself shed tears at her distress; but Pierre was inexorable, and leaving her to her reflections carefully locked the door, and, conveying the key into his pocket, stationed three centinels, for the purpose of preventing an escape or a rescue. Proceeding now to the chamber of Jaques, they left him in fullen and pensive mood; a similar guard was stationed at the door, and, the redoubtable hero, Pierre, at the head of his courageous band, returned crowned with laurels to his companions.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

REFLECTING upon the incident that had just occurred, the Baron now concluded that his household, or at least a majority of its retainers, were unconcerned in the conspiracy; but a new danger courted his contemplation: it was evident there was a plot formed, from his son's obtaining the keys, and the arrest of Jaques and Margaret; it was likewise evident his most secret concealments had been betrayed, and Matilda wrested out of his hands; the discoveries promised by Jaques, what could they relate to? no doubt to a conspiracy, the

the execution of which was to be derived from without : that his son, and Jaques, and Margâret should conspire, when they had no promise of others assistance, was impossible. It must be an armed band was, no doubt, employed to storm the castle in the dead of night, to massacre himself, and those domestics who remained faithful to their master ; and whilst his son escaped all suspicion of being an accomplice, he alone would be benefited. Influenced by this fear, he determined to descend immediately to strengthen the defence of the castle, and keep his retainers upon the alert. Carrying this purpose into execution, he soon arrived in the lower regions of his mansion, where the anxious preparations which had been made, added to the fear and agitation visible in the countenances of his domestics, reacted upon the imagination

gination of the Baron, and confirmed him in the supposition of some horrible attempt being in contemplation. Pierre obsequiously bowed and said, "An please you, my Lord, no one hath attempted to go out or come in, and we are all prepared to meet the enemy when he thinks proper to make his appearance." This only served to increase the terror of the Baron, who already fancied he heard the trampling of horses without the castle gate: he charged them to increase their vigilance, and be prepared for an attack. The agitation visible in his manner renewed the fright of his domestics, and they waited with trembling anxiety, for the hour of the enemy's arrival.

The Baron reascended the stair-case to his apartment, and now having perceived the fidelity of his domestics, though suspicion still haunted his breast, he had
leisure

leisure to turn his thoughts to Matilda; it was possible his son and Matilda were still in some dungeon, waiting an opportunity of escape, but it was likewise possible a body of armed men had been introduced into the subterranean apartments, for the purpose of surprizing the castle; the thought again agitated him with fear, and he remained for a considerable time in a state of anxious suspense unable to determine upon the steps he ought to take. He wished to explore the dungeons, but durst not; he could not call in the aid of any of his domestics, for then the villainous duplicity of his conduct, regarding Matilda, would be discovered, and himself, perhaps, become in great danger. At length, no alternative remaining, for he must either seek her in the gloom and darkness of the dungeons, or lose her for ever, and then

then perhaps be involved in destruction, which could only meet him if he boldly sought for her in the subterranean caverns; he resolved to commence the search, and taking with him a dagger, with which he intended to put a period to his life, rather than become a prisoner to his enemies, he summoned two females to accompany him, and having lighted a torch they began to descend.

A gloomy horror penetrated the mind of the Baron, upon arriving in the subterranean passage, and having examined the dungeon doors opposite, and perceived them to be fast, they cautiously advanced into the passage, at the further end of which sat Conrad and Marianne, whom he fondly caressed as his beloved Matilda. The Baron was proceeding towards their seat, when recollecting there was no passage that way, and not seeing

any one there, they turned, and walking to the opposite extremity, whilst the Baron fearfully viewed the open door, which he had so carefully concealed, they proceeded into the next, and he immediately determined to explore all the dungeons which extended themselves in a line on one side.

Arthur de Umfreville, in the mean time, hearing footsteps which appeared to proceed from the East Tower, and perceiving a glimpse of the light shine through a chink in the wall of the dungeon, where he was seated, doubted not his father was arrived in search of Matilda, and dreading the effects of his rage, instantly took his resolution, and leaving Matilda to her fate, he precipitately ran thro' the passages, made his exit at the private door, and ferrying over the moat, where he could not be perceived by any one in
the

the castle, fled into the country, and summoning a number of his father's retainers, arranged them in hostile array, and immediately marched towards the estates of the Baron de Montacute. His soldiers silently obeyed, and concluded it was the machinations of the Baron de Montacute which had been discovered, and caused those preparations at the castle, that struck the surrounding country with terror and dismay.

The Baron advancing in the execution of his purpose, at length arrived at the last of the dungeons he had deterred to examine, and on opening the door, discovered the helpless and forlorn Matilda sitting before him. The flight of her protector, and the approach of the footsteps had caused an agitation in the tender bosom of Matilda, that nearly overpowered her reason, and completely

berest her of the power of motion. The sight of her cruel and merciless tyrant now overwhelmed all remaining sense, and uttering a fearful scream, she fell senseless upon the ground. The females who accompanied the Baron, eager to render her assistance, rushed by him, and in the act of hastily passing, knocked the torch out of his hand, which falling to the ground, became immediately extinguished. Suspecting the accident to have been the effect of a preconcerted plan, he was immediately seized with wild affright; and not daring to move, imagined every moment the poniard of the assassin was uplifted to destroy him. The females having raised Matilda from the earth, supported her between them, and much frightened themselves at the gloomy darkness in which they were now enveloped,

Ioped, proposed to the Baron an immediate return to the Eastern tower. Immersed in fear and terror, he gladly acceded to the proposal, and taking hold of one of his female attendants, slowly and cautiously retraced his steps, whilst they with difficulty bore along the lifeless form of Matilda.

The Baron was now in a situation calculated to excite commiseration, even whilst he still remained an object of horror and contempt. All those fears which even in meridian day, haunted his imagination, now returned with tenfold force, the thick darkness which surrounded him, added strength to all the horrors that rushed into his mind, and caused a tremor and agitation that scarcely allowed his trembling limbs to bear him through the subterranean gloom. Arrived at length at the tower, he recollected himself suf-

ficiently, to carefully fasten the door leading to the dungeons, and then leaving the females who had attended him, to restore animation to Matilda's form, afraid of being alone, he retired to the apartment where several others were assembled, and interrupting their mirth, became himself the gloomy object of their fearful contemplation.

The terrors he had experienced in the subterranean regions of his mansion, had so much overwhelmed him, that he became seriously indisposed. His female companions endeavoured by every attention in their power to render his sensations of pain less acute, but to "admissionister to a mind diseased" with all the complicated horrors of terror and remorse, was beyond their skill. Independent of the fright he had undergone, he was now anxiously puzzled when

when combining all the circumstances attendant upon the escape of Matilda from her confinement, to discover any clue likely to guide him through the labyrinth in which he was involved. He too clearly perceived there was an open passage from the entrance into the subterranean apartments even to the door which led immediately to the apartments of the East Tower, but he had not the courage to resolve, even had all the females in the place accompanied him, upon again encountering the silence and gloom of the dungeons; added to which, he was now considerably weakened by indisposition. Whilst deeply musing upon the strange events that had happened, one of the females who had been attending upon Matilda entered the room, and informed him she was recovered, but still remained weak and languid.

Anxious to become acquainted with the manner in which her escape from the Tower had been effected, he ordered her to be brought before him. Matilda soon after appeared trembling and agitated, with a throbbing bosom and palpitating heart, but still possessing sufficient firmness of mind to set at defiance the insidious arts of the Baron. The latter, with the most dissimulating politeness, said, "I congratulate you, my lovely Matilda, upon the escape from the dungeon whither you had unconsciously retired." Matilda, who had not yet discovered the loss of the note she had received, was afraid of an enquiry being instituted, the result of which might expose her beloved Conrad to destruction; and supposing no one to be acquainted with the plan but themselves, immediately determined to deceive, if possible, her haughty tyrant
into

into a belief that she alone had conducted her escape from the Tower. Thus, eagerly desirous of preserving the life of her lover, she replied to the Baron, “ I “ was anxious, my Lord, to escape from “ the cruel imprisonment to which you “ have devoted me, and examining the “ door below, which I accidentally discovered, I found it to be unlocked, and “ immediately determining to regain that “ liberty of which you have unjustly deprived me, I pushed back the bolts and “ descended, but could not discover any “ passage leading out of the Castle, and “ therefore resolved to take refuge in the “ dungeon wherein you found me, and “ where, had not my escape come to your “ knowledge, I would have remained “ until chance favoured my flight, or “ death put a period to my sorrows.”

The triumph with which Matilda told

D 5

her

Anxious to become acquainted with the manner in which her escape from the Tower had been effected, he ordered her to be brought before him. Matilda soon after appeared trembling and agitated, with a throbbing bosom and palpitating heart, but still possessing sufficient firmness of mind to set at defiance the insidious arts of the Baron. The latter, with the most dissimulating politeness, said, “ I congratulate you, my lovely Matilda, upon the escape from the dungeon whither you had unconsciously retired.” Matilda, who had not yet discovered the loss of the note she had received, was afraid of an enquiry being instituted, the result of which might expose her beloved Conrad to destruction; and supposing no one to be acquainted with the plan but themselves, immediately determined to deceive, if possible, her haughty tyrant
into

into a belief that she alone had conducted her escape from the Tower. Thus, eagerly desirous of preserving the life of her lover, she replied to the Baron, “ I
“ was anxious, my Lord, to escape from
“ the cruel imprisonment to which you
“ have devoted me, and examining the
“ door below, which I accidentally discovered, I found it to be unlocked, and
“ immediately determining to regain that
“ liberty of which you have unjustly deprived me, I pushed back the bolts and
“ descended, but could not discover any
“ passage leading out of the Castle, and
“ therefore resolved to take refuge in the
“ dungeon wherein you found me, and
“ where, had not my escape come to your
“ knowledge, I would have remained
“ until chance favoured my flight, or
“ death put a period to my sorrows.”

The triumph with which Matilda told

D 5

her

her tale, staggered the Baron, who began to think it possible the door she had mentioned, might have remained by chance unlocked, and the circumstance, from no one's going near it, been undiscovered. But the other doors in the way towards the dungeon where he had found her, he knew to have been locked, and immediately asked, "How did you open the other doors in your way?" to which Matilda replied, "I found them all unlocked, or at least easily to be opened, and proceeded without obstruction." An improbability seemed to rest upon her relation; and the Baron, determining to make one more effort to penetrate the mystery which seemed to thicken around him, said, at the same time assuming a confident smile, "Your narration, my lovely Matilda, will not impose upon me, as I am fully acquainted

“quainted with all the means that have
“been made use of for your rescue.”

Matilda however possessed too much firmness to be intimidated by this boast of the Baron; and with an intrepidity inspired by her anxiety for the preservation of Conrad, immediately replied, “The
“facts I have given you, my Lord, are
“strictly true, and if there were any
“means made use of for the purpose of
“rescuing me from my detested confine-
“ment, I have only to lament my igno-
“rance of those friendly efforts.” The
tone with which she uttered this reply, convinced the Baron it was useless to continue his interrogatory, and he dismissed her to her chamber; but as soon as she had quitted the room, he charged the females present to confine her in her apartment, and not permitting her upon any account to leave it, to serve her

D 6

there

there with every article she stood in need of.

Somewhat recovered from his fright and indisposition, and summoning two females to attend him, he proceeded to his own apartments, where he had not remained long when an alarm was sounded in the Castle, and a call to arms thrilled him with emotions of terror. He hastened to one of the windows of his apartment, and saw a considerable body of men in hostile array, marching on foot with all expedition towards the Castle. Alarmed and agitated, he determined to defend it to the last extremity; and descending amongst his domestics, encouraged and stimulated them to action, whilst he remained a prey to the most anxious fears. This, no doubt, was the completion of the dark conspiracy which he had been unable to discover, and he knew not what enemies might

might be within even amongst the very domestics, who, with so much alacrity obeyed his commands.

The hostile band now swiftly approached, and surprise and terror alternately swayed his mind when he saw, before his mansion, his son at the head of a number of his own retainers. Arthur, who, after a little reconnoitring, had thus returned to deceive his father into a belief of the impossibility of his having been instrumental in the escape of Matilda, was no less surprised at seeing the Castle gates shut, the draw-bridge drawn up, men upon the battlements armed at all points, and a shower of arrows ready to be poured upon him and his adherents. He thought it impossible that his share in the escape of Matilda could have been discovered, and though he was ignorant of the game of cross purposes that had been played in
his

his father's mansion, and could not guess the cause of the hostile preparations before him; yet, concluding he had nothing to fear, he dismissed the retainers after parading them before his father, whom he saw looking out, and singly requested admittance at the Castle gates.

The Baron, who, during the whole day, had been tossed about in a whirlwind of surmise and suspicion, remained involved in much anxiety and suspense, whilst his son was at the head of the retainers before his mansion. The conspiracy which his distempered imagination had presented before his view, and which had so greatly alarmed his fears, now recurred with increased vivacity, and he still fancied himself betrayed and stripped of his power and his life. At length, when he saw the retainers completely dispersed, and his son alone demanding

manding entrance, he became in some measure divested of his fright, and ordered his son to be admitted, though the command was issued with some degree of reluctance and hesitation.

Arthur, on entering and finding all the domestics armed, and several upon guard, whilst his father likewise armed was standing before him, experienced himself some degree of agitation, and eagerly enquired the cause of their alarm. The Baron, who had imagined his son to be still in the dungeons, and knowing he had not departed at the Castle gates since the command had been issued to prevent their being opened to any one without his express permission, was much surprised at the manner of his appearance before them, and his entrance in the usual way, and began to suppose he was mistaken in implicating Arthur in the conspiracy:

But

But still haunted by suspicion, in reply to the enquiry of the latter, he said, "Intelligence of a plot to surprize the Castle having reached my ear, I thought it necessary to take these precautions."

Arthur immediately perceived in his father's reply the means of annihilating all suspicion in his breast relative to his having any share in the flight of the female, of whose name and person he was ignorant, from the East Tower, and said, "Your precautions, my Lord, are in every point of view just and proper, and I have reason to believe such a conspiracy has been actually formed, tho' most probably it will be disconcerted by the discovery which has thus early taken place. I descended into the dungeons soon after I had obtained your keys, and having examined those in the first tier on the eastern side, which
" consumed :

“ consumed a considerable portion of
“ time, I determined to quit the labour,
“ and taking my departure from the
“ Castle, reconnoitre the domains of
“ Montacute. During my expedition,
“ I discovered, from a variety of circum-
“ stances, that a plot of some kind was really
“ in agitation, and it affords me great
“ pleasure to see your Lordship so well
“ prepared.” Saying this, he returned
into the hands of his father the keys of
the dungeon which he had before re-
ceived from him.

The Baron was now again involved in
fears for which there appeared a real
foundation. The probability of a surprise
being attempted, agitated his mind, and
giving strict orders to keep an unremit-
ting watch during the whole night, he
ascended to his apartment accompanied
by his son, for the purpose of consulting
with.

with him on the best means of defeating the intended enterprize.

His son having retired, he began again to reflect upon the passage that had been effected through the subterranean apartments, and was half inclined to believe in the tale related to him by Matilda, but its improbability appeared so glaring, that he was compelled to suppose the assistance of some other person. Wholly ignorant of his son's being in possession of a key capable of opening the private door, and the means of escaping unobserved over the moat, he concluded it was impossible for him to have fled at the time of his commencing the search for Matilda, and from his so readily delivering up the keys it was evident he had not left her in them for the purpose of again proceeding there to complete her rescue.

In this dilemma he called up Pierre,
and

and demanded if any one appertaining to the household was absent from the Castle. The latter, after considering for a few moments, informed him that Conrad was absent upon a journey into the country. The suspicions of the Baron were now all fastened upon Conrad, and supposing him to have been the assistant in the escape of Matilda, and to be still in the dungeons, though he could not conceive the means by which he had arrived there, he renewed with peculiar emphasis the orders he had before given, not to let any one pass through the Castle gates without his particular command for that purpose.

Unusual fatigue of body, and extreme perturbation of mind had now exhausted the Baron, and finding himself much indisposed, was compelled to retire to bed. But gloomy suspicion and terrific fear, added to some degree of pain, allowed him

him not to rest; and, after passing a sleepless night, he arose in the morning rather rendered worse than refreshed by his retirement.

The day was somewhat advanced, when Pierre entered the apartment, and to the no small surprise of his Lord, informed him that Conrad without requested leave of entrance. "Conrad!" replied the Baron with a considerable degree of astonishment visible in his countenance, but, recollecting himself, said, "You must be surely mistaken, he cannot be so soon returned;" and, rising from his seat, was about to depart, for the purpose of convincing himself of the truth of his domestic's assertion; but finding himself extremely weak, and recollecting he had never seen the person in question, and therefore could not by his own view be convinced of his reality, he sent for his
son,

son, and desired him to go and be certain whether it was really Conrad who requested admission.

Arthur was soon convinced of the truth of Pierre's assertion, and the astonished Baron gave immediate orders for his admission. Conrad entered into the Castle fatigued and melancholy, having, with considerable expedition, retraced his steps to the mansion; and, much indisposed from the anxiety and perturbation of his mind, found himself compelled to retire for the purpose of obtaining rest, of which he stood much in need. His mind being absorbed in the contemplation of Matilda's danger and his own cruel disappointment, he had not noticed the warlike preparations in the Castle, but repaired immediately to his chamber.

There was now no one remaining whom the Baron could fix upon as the accomplice

plice of Matilda in her flight, but recollecting the important discoveries promised by Jaques, whom, in the hurry of his mind, he had hitherto forgotten, he concluded he had something to relate which might involve the denouement of the plot his imagination had formed. Fearing, however, that his other domestics should arrive at the knowledge of the treachery and duplicity of his conduct relative to Matilda, whose existence he supposed Jaques, from his mysterious promise, was acquainted with, he sent for Pierre, and commanded him to bring before him immediately his prisoner Jaques.

The order was instantly obeyed, and the trembling Jaques brought by Pierre, at the head of an armed detachment, into the presence of the Baron, who had now seated himself arrayed in all his pomp and magnificence. The latter immediately commanded

commanded Pierre and his band to withdraw; and shortly afterwards, addressing himself to Jaques, with a lowered voice he said, "Jaques, if you will make those
" discoveries you promised, and they are
" really of importance, you shall have my
" sacred word for your safety!" Jaques, from the manner of his introduction to the Baron, and the tone of his address, soon imagined he was in fear of some plot; and now supposing it would be to no purpose to assert his innocence, as he would most probably, notwithstanding, become a sacrifice to the suspicious temper of his master, he thought it a good opportunity to retort upon his enemy Pierre, and by accusing him, reinstate himself in the favour of his master. With this view, after some hesitation, he said, "I humbly
" intreat your Lordship's attention whilst
" I say, that I am wholly innocent of the
" charges

“charges alledged against me.”—“Let
“me not hear of your innocence,” interrupted the impatient Baron, “but of the
“discoveries you have promised to make;”
“Then, my Lord,” replied Jaques, “I
“have to inform your Lordship, that
“Pierre is the traitor who was leagued
“with your Lordship’s enemies, to sur-
“prize your Lordship’s castle, and mur-
“der your Lordship and the Lord Ar-
“thur.”—“Pierre in league with my
“enemies!” returned the Baron affright-
ed and dismayed; “How did you be-
“come acquainted with this?”—“My
“Lord, I overheard a conversation that
“passed between Pierre and one of the
“retainers of the Baron de Montacute,
“in which it was agreed to attempt the
“castle to-night.”—“To-night!” ut-
tered the Baron in a tremulous and
agitated tone of voice. “Yes, my Lord,
“this

“ this very night, and Pierre having seen
“ me, suspecting, I suppose, I had over-
“ heard the conversation, had me arrest-
“ ed and charged with treason, that I
“ might not stand in his way.” The
fabricated tale of Jaques wore such a face
of plausibility, that it instantly obtained
credit in the suspicious mind of the Baron,
who trembling with fear, and filled with
the most melancholy apprehensions, now
fancied he saw a mine of destruction rea-
dy to burst beneath his feet, and suppos-
ing Matilda, as well as the other females
in the East Tower, to be accomplices in
the plot, called out with eager anxiety ;
“ But what of Matilda ?” Jaques struck
with astonishment at such a question, stood
absorbed in surprize, and knew not what
to answer. The hasty fright of the Baron
had for once overpowered his dissimula-
tion and presence of mind, and observ-

ing the wonder of Jaques, began to repent his impetuosity, and reflecting her existence might still be a secret, endeavoured to turn the question into another direction by saying, "Is her death yet accounted for?"

Jaques, however, was possessed of a tolerable share of penetration, and observing the agitation with which his master enquired concerning Matilda, immediately suspected the deception relative to her death, and determined to take advantage of the circumstance, and overwhelm his enemy with the Baron's displeasure, beyond every hope of again retrieving his favour. In answer to the last question asked by the Baron, Jaques at length replied, "No, my Lord, her death is even doubted;" "What?" uttered the Baron, with trembling impatience, "doubted, who dares to doubt it?"

“ it?” “ Pierre, my Lord, doubts it,
“ and the Baron de Montacute.”—The
terrors of the Baron now took a new di-
rection, and with palpitating anxiety, he
hastily interrupted Jaques—“ What of
“ the Baron de Montacute?” My Lord,
“ I believe the Baron de Montacute and
“ Pierre are in league together, and I
“ have reason to suspect—but I should
“ first have told your Lordship, that
“ Pierre says, your Lordship hath con-
“ fined Matilda in the East Tower.”
The Baron was now no longer master of
himself, and in vehement tones called
out, “ Rascal—Villain—Scoundrel, I’ll
“ rack him upon the wheel for his false-
“ hood.” The violent rage of his mas-
ter only served to confirm the suspi-
cions of Jaques, and he continued, “ I
“ was going to tell your Lordship that,
“ I have cause to suppose, that the Ba-

“ de Montacute and Pierre are in league,
“ and after they have murdered your
“ Lordship and the Lord Arthur, they
“ mean to search for Matilda in the East
“ Tower, and carry her off.” Rage, pride,
jealousy and fear, now alternately pre-
sided in the mind of the Baron. The
conspiracy, he had feared, and the my-
sterious darkness of which he had been
unable to penetrate, now appeared com-
pletely developed, and the Baron de
Montacute, instead of Arthur, was to
ravish from him Matilda, whilst Pierre
his confidant, was to be his chief accom-
plice, and perhaps many of his domestics
were now anxiously waiting to act their
parts in the tragedy of conspiracy. Jaques
to display still farther the falsehood of
Pierre said, “He told me, my Lord,
“ that he interceded with your Lordship
“ not to confine me in a dungeon.” “He
“ lies,”

“lies,” said the Baron, “and he shall now suffer for his falsehood.”

Terrified at the abyss which already seemed to yawn beneath his feet, and threatened to swallow him in its gulph, he congratulated himself upon the discovery, and promising Jaques reward and honour for the disclosure, immediately summoned before him Pierre, who not doubting but he was to convey Jaques back to his prison, brought with him his armed detachment, and appeared triumphantly in the presence of the Baron, who was now alarmed at the appearance of his own domestics in arms, fearfully dreading they were about to turn them against himself. Concealing his agitation, however, he ordered them immediately to seize Pierre. The latter was so little suspicious of being implicated in treason, that he concluded the Baron had made a

mistake, and pronounced Pierre instead Jaques; the domestics who attended him thought the same, and did not offer to seize Pierre or Jaques. Impressed with this idea, Pierre immediately replied, bowing obsequiously at the same time, " I humbly imagine your lordship has " made a trifling mistake." The Baron struck with terror at the hesitation of his domestics, already imagined them conferring together about the manner of beginning to execute the conspiracy, and rising from his seat, impelled at once by rage and fear, vehemently repeated, " I " command you to seize the traitor Pierre " instantly, and not blunder again;" whilst in pretending to advance upon them with an air of menace, he was preparing to leave the room with precipitation, in the event of their disobedience. The domestics durst no longer hesitate, and immediately

immediately seized the man whom the Baron had pointed out. The latter seeing his commands at length obeyed, became divested of his fear, and again taking his elevated seat, haughtily demanded of Pierre what he had to alledge against Jaques. The former astonished, and terrified at the unexpected and unlooked for circumstance of his arrest, stood trembling between the men who held him, and returned no answer. The Baron, with greater vehemence repeated the demand, and Pierre at length stammered out, "My Lord, my Lord, my Lord we, we, we took him up upon, upon suspicion;" "Suspicion," fiercely retorted the Baron; "and what suspicion?" Pierre from the manner with which the Baron interrogated him, concluding he had entirely lost his favour, sunk into despair, and the Baron repeated

the question with increased rage, before he thought of returning an answer; at length he again endeavoured to speak, and said, "My Lord, my Lord, my Lord, we suspected him, we suspected him, my Lord, of being concerned, of being concerned in the, in the, in the conspiracy." "What conspiracy?" said the Baron, his eyes sparkling with anger whilst he shook with fear at the very mention of conspiracy: "My Lord, my Lord, my Lord," replied the trembling Pierre, "the plot, the plot, the plot which, which, which we supposed, we supposed your Lordship your Lordship, from the orders, you, you, you gave us, had, had, had discovered:" "And is that all?" replied the Baron, "you have to alledge against him?"—"My, my, my Lord," resumed Pierre, "he said he had, he had discoveries to, to,

“ to, to make, and so, and so, and so I
“ supposed, an please your Lordship,
“ that, that, that he was guilty.”

The improbability of Pierre bringing Jaques into his presence, whilst at the same time he suspected him capable of revealing the supposed plot, never entered into the mind of the Baron, but, yielding to his suspicions, the answers of Pierre only served to confirm his belief of a conspiracy, in which that domestic was the principal agent, and immediately ordering him to deliver up his keys, he gave them to Jaques, in token of his reinstatement in the superintendency of the household, and ordered him to take the command of the armed detachment which Pierre had so triumphantly led into his presence, and to convey the latter, now in turn, his prisoner, to one of the dungeons below. The terrified Pierre would

have abjectly knelt at the feet of the Baron, and implored for mercy, but he was fast held by his guards, and doubting not that Jaques had been uttering calumnies against him, he called out, "Indeed, " indeed, my Lord, I am not guilty of any " crime;" but the Baron thundered in his ears, "Villain, I am well acquainted " with thy crimes, you shall be imprisoned in those dungeons from confinement in which you so falsely boasted of " having rescued Jaques;" and turning again to Jaques, he said, "take him " immediately to one of the dungeons " on the western side—lock him safely " in—let him have no communication " with any one, and only bread and water for his food, which yourself must " supply him with, and keep a strict and " constant guard at the door leading " down to them to prevent a surprize;"

saying

saying this the Baron gave him the keys of all the dungeons, except those beneath the East Tower.

Jaques instantly obeyed, and, whilst Pierre piteously bewailed his lot, hurried him away with insulting taunts to his prison. With the utmost terror the astonished domestics saw the man, whom their suspicions had lately pointed out as a traitor, now marching at the head of the detachment, bearing in triumph the keys of his dominion, whilst Pierre, pale and half dead with fear, was insultingly dragged along a prisoner by those who had just before been obsequiously obedient to his nod. To increase the general terror, Jaques, with a face of alarm, called upon a number of the other retainers to augment his guard, as if already in danger of a rescue, who tremblingly obeyed, and in solemn form he conveyed

his affrighted prisoner to one of the western dungeons, where, loading him with chains, he left him to lament his lost power, and, reascending the stairs carefully locked the door, and stationed there a strong guard, in pursuance of his master's orders. He now hastened to release his beloved Margaret, whose astonishment was only equalled by her joy at seeing her Jaques again the deputy sovereign of the household.

The tale, related to the Baron by Jaques, accorded so well with those suspicions concerning the designs of the Baron de Montacute, which Arthur, to suit his own purposes, had, from time to time, infused into his mind, that not a doubt remained of the existence of the conspiracy, detailed by his crafty domestic. Summoning his son to his presence, he related to him the whole of what Jaques had pretended

tended to reveal to him, except what related to Matilda, which he carefully concealed. Arthur was now himself astonished, and began to imagine his father had suspected his journey through the dungeons, and was in consequence taking effectual means to prevent him from again traversing their gloomy passages. But the Baron's earnestness of manner, and the real agitation visible in his countenance, convinced his son at least of the reality of his belief, if not of the truth of the conspiracy.

The Baron charged his son, with a considerable degree of anxiety, to summon the retainers without the castle to his standard, and make use of every possible means to guard against and defeat the expected attempt. In the midst of their conversation a female from the East Tower abruptly entered the room, and,
with

with much agitation, acquainted the Baron with the escape of Marianne. Believing her to be actually much indisposed they had not thought it proper to disturb her, until, alarmed by the long continuance of her absence, they repaired to the door of her apartment, which, after fruitlessly knocking at, for some time, they broke open, and to their no small astonishment discovered her flight. Unable to find her, after an assiduous search through all the apartments of the Tower, the female, now in the presence of the Baron, had come trembling with fear to inform him of the unlooked for event.

Arthur now concluded that Marianne must be the female who had thrown herself into his arms at the door of the East Tower and was considerably agitated with the fear of a discovery. The Baron was little less alarmed with the fear of his adversary.

versary Montacute and his accomplices, and observing the agitation of his son, attributed it to the same cause, and said to him, in tremulous tones, "See Arthur how I am betrayed, depart instantly and summon all my retainers to the castle, or we shall both, perhaps, be murdered." Arthur knew not what to think of the conspiracy which had been developed to him, but his dearest interests were at stake in the event of its reality, and he, therefore, did not hesitate to obey his father's commands. He instantly departed from the castle, and, summoning the retainers of Umfreville to his standard, stationed them around, so as effectually to prevent the approach of any hostile band undiscovered.

The Baron, in the mean time, once more summoned Matilda to his presence, who having now discovered the loss of
the

the note, delivered to her by Conrad, repaired, trembling, to his apartment, fearful that her beloved Conrad had been betrayed by its accidental loss, which she deplored with the most heart-felt grief. Again commencing his interrogatories, and with his mind full of Pierre and the Baron de Montacute, he said, "I now know, Matilda, that you had an accomplice in your escape, and that accomplice was my villainous superintendant Pierre." Matilda, astonished at hearing a name of which she had no knowledge mentioned as the assistant of her flight, supposed, from the positive assertion of the Baron, that she had herself been deceived, and had flown into the arms of Pierre instead of her lover, and that the manner of her escape being now discovered it might be dangerous to deny it any longer; she therefore replied, after
some

some hesitation, "When I opened the
" door, my Lord, leading to the dun-
" geons, a man was there who conducted
" me into the dungeon wherein you dis-
" covered me, but who he was I know
" not, and it was this ignorance of him
" which induced me before to conceal
" the circumstance." This relation added
fuel to the Baron's suspicions, and he asked
her, "Did Marianne escape with you?"
"No, my Lord, but as the door was
" unlocked she might escape without
" difficulty."

From the answers of Matilda the Baron now concluded that, though she might be destined to become the prize of the victor, her escape was accidental, and that Marianne was the traitress who had become an accomplice with his enemies; and the circumstance of the former being left in the dungeon convinced him that
her

her flight was not intended by her conductor, who therefore left her in the subterraneous apartment where himself had found her. Apologizing to Matilda, with the utmost politeness for the harshness of his conduct towards her, he dismissed her to the enjoyment of all the liberty the East Tower could afford, expressing a hope of soon again enjoying the pleasure of her company. Matilda gladly retired from his presence, delighted that Conrad was not in danger, and now supposing the note she received had been intended as a decoy, or really for another female, cherished in her bosom, with greater warmth, a hope of escape, of which she now thought there might be a better opportunity.

The Baron was now half inclined to put Pierre to the torture, for the purpose of extorting confession, but recollecting the
the

the material evidence which Marianne might be induced to give, if taken, and there being no necessity for keeping any measure of concealment respecting her, he immediately instituted a search in the castle and the dungeons beneath, the conduct of which he intrusted to his son and Jaques, and also a pursuit without, sending several retainers different ways in search of her.

C H A P. III.

MARIANNE, in the mean time, after Conrad had quitted her, to return disconsolately to the castle, began to consider of a plan for her future conduct. She now enquired of the inhabitants of the cottage relative to her parents, and was informed by them of their departure from the country. Entirely friendless, and without money, and from the nature of her education wholly ignorant of any means by which she might acquire a subsistence, and from long habits of indolence disinclined to labour, she found herself without a home, and to have

have escaped from the evils attendant upon her imprisonment only to experience those more dreadful, penury and want.

In the midst of her reflections, the inhabitants of the cottage, wondering the supposed pilgrim made so long a stay, invited her to partake of their homely dinner. With this invitation she complied, so far as to descend from her solitude and take her seat with the family, but having been long the inmate of excessive luxury, even hunger could now scarcely induce her to taste of the coarse though wholesome viands that were set before her. Disgusted with her fare, with the homely plainness of the people who hospitably endeavoured to entertain her, and with every thing she saw around her, she sat silently musing upon her condition. All the luxuries and conveniencies she

she had partaken of, and enjoyed, in the stately mansion of Umfreville, now rushed into her mind in full force, and lost nothing by being contrasted with the want of all that habit instigated her to denominate the necessaries of life, which appeared in striking colours delineated around her. The hardships of imprisonment were forgotten, and she lamented the folly that had influenced her to escape. In full possession of the liberty she had so ardently desired, she knew not how to enjoy it, and remaining overpowered by ennui, she possessed no means, in her present situation, of employing her hours, or imparting pleasure to the passing moment.

Liable and weary she at length walked out of the cottage, without any settled purpose, but merely from the impulse of indolence, and not deigning to thank its inhabitants for what she had certainly not enjoyed,

enjoyed, but which they had given with the most hospitable and friendly intent ; she proceeded onward without knowing whither her steps tended. After walking and resting alternately, a considerable time, she entered, unconsciously, upon the domains of the Baron de Montacute, who happened to be riding near the spot with a number of attendants, and Marianne being disguised in man's apparel, with a sort of hat which concealed her face, he did not at first notice her ; a sudden gust of wind, however, having, just as he arrived near her, blown away her hat, the Baron was struck with the face, and, notwithstanding the habit, immediately supposed the figure before him to be a woman in disguise. Marianne, perceiving near her a man who was apparently of rank, darted a look at him, which served to confirm his supposition, whilst

whilst it excited much wonder in his mind at the disguise she had assumed.

Her beauty and elegance of form enflamed his imagination in spite of her disguise and fatigue, and, alighting from his horse, he respectfully approached her, whilst his attendants remained at a short distance; Marianne complacently waited his approach. "Madam," said the Baron, "for I think I may address you by that title, excuse my rudeness, but you appear to be fatigued, and I approached you for the purpose of making an offer of all the conveniences my mansion affords until you shall again chuse to resume a journey, no doubt, dictated by some imperious motive." Marianne was about to reply, when several persons hastily approached, and vehemently pronounced her name; turning her eyes towards them, with some degree of trepidation,

tion, she immediately recognized the livery of Umfreville. Alarmed and terrified at the prospect of the brutality she had every reason to expect from the rage of her former master, she flew into the arms of Montacute, and piteously implored him to deliver her from their attack.

Montacute enflamed by her beauty, rendered more interesting by her distress—and melted by her tears—immediately, upon the impulse of the moment, summoned his attendants, who had already half approached, imagining their master to be in danger. The Baron retreated towards them with Marianne; and the retainers of Umfreville, who were really in pursuit of her, halted, and were, for a while, undetermined what conduct they should pursue. Reflecting, however, on their danger, from the anger of the Baron, their master, if by any means he should

become acquainted with their retreat after gaining sight of Marianne, without making any effort to seize her; they resolved upon an attack, if necessary, and one of them, taking upon him the command, advanced towards the Baron de Montacute, and, in the name of his master, demanded the restitution of the woman whom he had prevented them from seizing, as the servant of the Baron de Umfreville, whom he wished to punish for treason against her Lord, of which she had been guilty.

Montacute had predetermined not to yield her unless compelled by force, and, regardless of consequences, haughtily refused compliance with the request. No alternative but the sword now remained, and the retainers of Umfreville bravely advanced to the attack, which was met with equal courage by Montacute and his

his attendants. The fight continued for some time, with equal ardour, but the retainers of Montacute, more numerous than their assailants, and animated by the presence and encouragement of their master, overpowered the latter, and putting them all to the sword, except two, whose swiftness preserved their lives, Montacute bore away in triumph the grateful and overjoyed Marianne, whom he considered as a prize worthy of the exertions he had made for her preservation.

The retainers who had escaped, fled with all speed into the presence of their master, sweating, and breathless, and exhausted by their flight. The Baron alarmed by their abrupt appearance, and agitated countenances, immediately concluded the Baron de Montacute was at hand, and about to commence his attack, and

eagerly enquired, "What news?" "O
" an please your Lordship," said one of
them, "we have hardly been able to save
" our lives." The Baron impatient at
their appearance, angrily repeated "what
" news, I say?" "An please your Lord-
" ship," continued the retainer, "we
" had just taken the Lady Marianne,
" whom your Lordship sent us in pursuit
" of, in men's clothes, when the Baron
" de Montacute came up, my Lord, at
" the head of all his retainers, and at-
" tacked us; we did all we could my
" Lord, and bravely defended ourselves,
" we laid about us my Lord, finely, and
" sent a good many of them out of the
" world, I assure your Lordship; but
" they were fifty times more numerous
" than us, my Lord; and so at last,
" please your Lordship, when all our
" companions were laid low, we were
" obliged

“ obliged to fly for our lives, and leave
“ the Lady Marianne to the Baron :
“ they pursued us, my Lord, for some
“ miles, and I wonder how we did to
“ escape, please your Lordship.”

The Baron doubted not the truth of what agreed so well with all that had been related to him for several hours past, and expecting every moment the appearance of Montacute, at the head of all his retainers, whilst he suspected the fidelity of some of his household, displayed considerable alarm and anxiety, and redoubled every precaution of defence. Arthur, who happened to be present when the retainers entered his father's apartment, no longer doubted the hostile intentions of Montacute ; and himself under a considerable degree of apprehension and alarm, offered immediately to lead his father's retainers against him, and give

him battle upon the spot; but the Baron afraid of his castle being surpris'd in the absence of Arthur, would not permit him to depart, and making every possible preparation for defence, anxiously waited the event of the expected attack.

The retainers who had returned from the encounter with Montacute and his party, soon blazed it amongst the household, magnifying their danger, and gaining admiration and applause for their courage; whilst Jaques terrified at the murderous tale, almost persuaded himself into a belief that he had actually overheard the pretended plot revealed by the unguarded conversation of Pierre, and congratulated himself on being beforehand in the discovery of a conspiracy which now appeared to have been actually formed.

The night was passed in alarm, and
was

was a sleepless one to all the inhabitants of the Castle; frequently the roaring of the wind was mistaken for an enemy, endeavouring to break open the castle gates, and the pelting of the rain for arrows that shot against the casements. The dawn of day found them in the same state of safety and alarm. It was now concluded that the Baron de Montacute, hearing of the preparations made for defence at the Castle of Umfreville, had altered his intention, or at least put off the execution of his scheme. Encouraged by this, the Baron de Umfreville now resolved to send some one invested with full power, to make a formal demand of the fugitive Marianne. But the Baron de Montacute had been reveling in her charms, and was too much fascinated with her numerous attractions to yield her so easily, and sent back a

proud defiance, instead of a compliance with the demand made by his rival.

Montacute was in reality ignorant of the vast preparations that had been made by the Baron de Umfreville, of which he had been the fearful object, and giving orders to prepare for the contest, which had now become inevitable, concluded there would be ample time to take all the necessary steps, whilst his opponent was likewise making ready. The Baron de Umfreville however, on receiving the defiance of his rival, as well as intelligence of the absence of warlike preparation, which appeared upon his estates, immediately ordered his son to march and rescue by force the unfortunate Marianne. Arthur obeyed the command, and was upon the domains of Montacute, before the latter supposed the messenger he had given his defiance

to

to, had returned to the castle of Umfreville.

Wholly unprepared for so unexpected an attack, he summoned about him a few of his retainers upon the spur of the occasion, and unable to make a defence, requested a truce and a conference with Arthur de Umfreville, a demand which was, after some consideration, granted; and Montacute, after a little hesitation, seeing no prospect of combating with advantage, the formidable force commanded by Arthur, agreed to yield up Marianne as a peace-offering. Arthur, too well acquainted, on a former occasion, with the prowess of his adversary, by no means wished to drive him to despair, and acceded to the terms of reconciliation. Montacute immediately delivered up Marianne, who wept, and implored her new protector in vain; he

had been fascinated with her beauty and attractions, but now compelled by stern necessity, turned a deaf ear to her intreaties, and she was forced away by Arthur, weeping and lamenting her fate, as she now concluded a cruel death would be the punishment of her flight.

Her beauty interested Arthur, but fearful of the rage of his father, he repelled the sensations it excited, and bearing her in triumph to the Baron, magnified his exploits, and displayed her as the hard earned prize of a well fought action. The Baron immediately, regardless of her intreaties, placed her under the custody of Jaques, ordering her to be confined in one of the dungeons, on the same side where Pierre was imprisoned, afraid if he confined her in one of those under the East Tower, Matilda might find an opportunity of escaping.

In

In quitting the room she accidentally dropped a paper which the Baron took up, and which was the identical letter written by Conrad, dropped by Matilda, and accidentally picked up by Marianne. He mused for some time upon the note, and at length concluded it must be certainly attributed to Pierre. The animated warmth of its conclusion, at the same time puzzled him not a little, as it seemed to be the Baron de Montacute for whom Marianne was to be rescued from imprisonment, but how could he gain a sight of or form any peculiar wish concerning her? A mysterious darkness gathered around him, which he could not penetrate, but considering Pierre and Marianne as the chief agents in the conspiracy, he determined to keep them close prisoners in their respective dungeons, but for the present delay their examina-

tion; and as there was now no immediate danger from the supposed machinations of Montacute, he dismissed the retainers who had been summoned from without, ordering them to keep themselves in readiness to be called out at a moment's warning, and relaxing the strictness of his precautions, retired to the apartment devoted to his pleasures, and sent for Matilda.

Matilda on arriving at the door of the hateful and detested room would have drawn back, and again retired to her apartment, but was forced in by the females who attended her, whilst the Baron seizing her hand, led her to a sofa, and seating her by his side said, "My dear
 " Matilda, I sent for you that we might
 " pass away an hour or two together in
 " the feast of reason, and the flow of soul,
 " and cheat the dull moments of their
 tedious-

“ tediousness.” “ It is impossible, my
“ Lord,” replied the beautiful Matilda,
“ that I can aid your Lordship in devot-
“ ing moments to mirth, when your
“ conduct fills with the bitterest sorrow
“ every hour of my life.” “ Your sor-
“ rows, my dear girl, are merely ima-
“ ginary, for all the real pleasures of life
“ are in your possession.” “ No, my
“ Lord; for you have deprived me of
“ my liberty, and without that every
“ other enjoyment sinks into insignifi-
“ cance.” Matilda durst not tell him
he had torn her from the man of her
heart, and was thus forced to lay the stress
of her complaint upon the loss of liberty,
which was in reality, only a secondary
consideration. The Baron immediately
replied, “ You have all the liberty, my
“ love, that any one can wish for, that
“ of enjoyment.” “ If your Lordship
“ will

“ will permit me to return to my parents,
 “ I shall then indeed be free.” This
 was no part of the Baron’s plan, and he
 replied, “ Your parents, as well as your
 “ brother, my love, are perfectly satisf-
 “ fied with your residence here, and have
 “ not the least wish for your return.”—

This Matilda knew to be false, and too
 surely seeing the aim of the Baron, remain-
 ed pensively silent. The latter throwing
 his arms about her, repeated a variety of
 what he might call fine things, but which
 conveyed only disgust to the ear of Ma-
 tilda, who agitated even to tears, by fear
 and anxiety, requested permission to retire
 to her apartment. The Baron was vexed
 at the indifference with which she treated
 his tender expressions, and the disgust,
 which she did not study to conceal; but
 still hoped to gain his point by persever-
 ance; and whilst he was angry at the lit-
 tle

the impresson he had made, was still pleased with the resistance he met with, and fed his vanity with the prospect of overcoming it. In answer to her request he said, "I do not desire to detain you
" my love, I only wish you not to persist in refusing to give your charms all
" the lustre they are capable of, and
" your attractions all their destined
" force." Matilda immediately retorted, "I hope, my Lord, I shall never
" quit the simple graces of modesty and
" innocence, to deck myself in meretricious allurements." The Baron was somewhat disconcerted by the firmness of her virtue, and hoping for a more favourable opportunity, permitted her to retire to her chamber.

Matilda having now the liberty of the whole of the East Tower, frequently meditated upon the means of her escaping,

ing, ignorant whether she owed her last half executed flight to Conrad, or to another; she thought she might perhaps, meet with another lucky chance of the same kind; and having pushed back the bolts of the door, leading to the dungeons, often waited there a considerable time, in hope of hearing some friendly footstep, and of seeing the door of her deliverance opened; frequently also she would anxiously watch at the windows of her apartment, hoping to receive another billet of instruction, to assist in completing her escape; but she knew not the impediment there was now to the secret traversing of the dungeons, and whilst she wondered no effort was made for her deliverance, and was sometimes half inclined to accuse her Conrad of neglect, he was pensive and melancholy at the cruel disappointment he had experienced, and the

the impossibility of at present effecting a passage to the prison of his Matilda, for the purpose of delivering her from her hateful confinement. Hearing of the recapture of Marianne, he became seriously alarmed, fearing a discovery of his being the unintentional accomplice of her flight, and of the object he aimed at in the attempt, and determined to plead extreme indisposition, that he might not be called upon any active duty in the castle, and as a reason for the retirement and privacy which he resolved to persist in, and which now accorded so well with the melancholy of his mind.

The Baron, at length determined to interrogate Pierre and Marianne concerning the conspiracy in which he did not doubt they were engaged; and first ordered Marianne to be brought before him, threatening her with the torture if she pre-

prevaricated in her answers ; he demanded by whose assistance, and by what means she had effected her escape ; Marianne trembling, related the manner, and what was really the fact, her ignorance of the person to whom she was indebted for it. The Baron considering her answers as fabricated for the purpose, ordered the instruments of torture to be made ready : Marianne fell on her knees, and imploring his mercy, said she should know the person who assisted her in her flight, upon seeing him again. The Baron immediately ordered Pierre to be brought up, and demanded of her if that was the man ; but of him, she with good reason, denied all knowledge : he now ordered her to be led over the household under a strong guard, that she might point out her accomplice if there. Every one was ordered to pass in review before her, and
of

of every one she denied all knowledge. Conrad alone escaped, he had locked himself into his room under the plea of indisposition, as was lately his custom, and imagining him to be ill, they would not disturb him. They now returned to the Baron with Marianne, relating, that she had looked at all the household, except Conrad, but could not meet with the person who had assisted in her escape. "It could not be Conrad," said the Baron pettishly, "he was out of the castle
"at the time."

The Baron now pulled the note he had picked up from his pocket, and shewing it to Pierre, asked him in tones of vehement anger, if he knew that; but several of the domestics present answered, that Pierre could neither read nor write, whilst Marianne to exculpate herself, related the circumstances attendant upon
her

her finding the billet in question. The Baron astonished at what he heard, knew not whether he should believe it, and lost in conjecture, began at length to imagine the Baron de Motacute himself had been in his castle in disguise, the author and conveyer of the note, as well as Mariane's accomplice in her flight. The circumstance of the latter rescuing her, and conveying her to his castle, seemed to confirm his supposition. Jealousy now took possession of his mind, and he dismissed them both to their respective dungeons, that he might meditate upon the circumstances of the case, and the conduct he ought to pursue.

Jaques, in the mean time, had mused upon the agitation evinced by the Baron in his eager demand relative to Matilda, and the manner in which he endeavoured to turn the question so unguardedly asked,

ed, and not the least doubt remained in his mind of the actual existence of Matilda in the East Tower. Piqued at the manner in which his master had endeavoured to evade the performance of his promise, and had thus blasted all his golden hopes of independence, he determined upon revenge, and considering the trust lately reposed in him, as nothing more than what he had been unjustly deprived of, he owed no gratitude, and resolved to deprive him of the prize he had so surreptitiously acquired. In what manner this could be best done, was a material consideration. Her brother, as he supposed Conrad to be, would not, he thought, from the mere impulse of fraternal affection, enter so warmly into any scheme formed for her rescue, as one who was inflamed by the desire of possessing those charms now monopolized by his

his master. And who so likely to become the object of this inflammability as Arthur, whom Jaques knew to be only withheld from intercepting his father's pleasures by the dread of his power and his rage.

Impressed with this idea he soon found an opportunity of meeting Arthur alone, and began a conversation: "Do you know, my Lord," said the crafty Jaques, "that Pierre, who is now in one of the dungeons, saith that Matilda is still alive." Arthur had by no means given up his hopes of wresting Matilda from his father to appropriate her to himself; on the contrary, the difficulties he had met with only served still farther to inflame his imagination, and render him more ardent in the pursuit of his scheme; but the guard, placed constantly before the door of the dungeons, had damped
his

his hopes, and bitterly lamenting his disappointment, he could still discover no means of again passing in secret through the subterraneous passages. The observation of Jaques now caused the thought to dart into his mind of making him his confidant and assistant in the scheme. Affecting some surprize, he replied, "Have you any reason, Jaques, to believe Pierre's assertion?" Jaques hesitated; he was afraid of mentioning yet the unguarded expression and agitation of the Baron, and, digressing from the immediate subject of conversation, he said, "She was a beautiful damsel, my Lord, do you not recollect her, Lord Arthur; her fine complexion—beautiful features—brilliant eyes—ruby lips and delicate shape." "O, she was an angelic creature," said Arthur. "I am inclined to imagine," said Jaques, "that

“that your Lordship lost your heart to
“that fair damsel.” “But what do you
“say,” said Arthur, “concerning her
“being still living, do you think it is
“really true.” “I have reasons for be-
“lieving so, my Lord,” said Jaques, in
a whispering voice, “which I don’t
“know whether I dare reveal to your
“Lordship.”—“O, you may depend
“upon my secrecy,” said Arthur, impa-
tient to hear them. Jaques here related
the observations he made upon the Ba-
ron’s manner respecting Matilda, and
Arthur entirely agreed with him in the
conclusion he had drawn from them.
They now remained looking at each
other, for a short time, as if each wished
the other to begin first. Arthur was
half afraid of trusting Jaques, knowing
him to be the confidant of his father,
but at length the latter broke the silence
by

by saying, "If I thought, my Lord;" he hesitated, and was somewhat afraid of proceeding. Arthur narrowly watched his manner, and now thinking he perceived a similar disposition with himself, respecting Matilda, no longer delayed, but immediately made his proposal; "If you can assist me in obtaining her, Jaques, you may depend upon my gratitude." Jaques now purposely hesitated, to increase the ardour of Arthur, who continued his offer; "I will present you with land, on succeeding to my father's estates, which will, most probably, not be far distant, sufficient to ensure you independence for the remainder of your life." Jaques still pretended to hesitate, and Arthur, anxious to secure his assistance, put the finishing stroke to his proposal, and said, "I pledge my honour for the performance of this

VOL. II. G "promise."

“promise.” Jaques had now obtained all he could desire from Arthur in return for the service he was to render him, and immediately promising his co-operation, a plan was formed, to be jointly executed by Arthur and Jaques, and they then separated, each to play his allotted part.

Conrad, in the interval, remained a prey to the most agonizing sensations; his Matilda, still a prisoner in the East Tower, and destined to become the victim to the lawless desires of the Baron, whilst it was utterly out of his power to render her any service. Afraid of Jaques, whom he considered as the confidant of the Baron, he hesitated to ask aid of him in delivering her; but the pain of his mind becoming too acute to be borne with fortitude, in a fit of despair he determined, at all hazards, to implore
the

the assistance of Jaques in rescuing her from her detested captivity. Finding an opportunity of speaking to him alone, soon after his consultation with Arthur, with the most earnest anxiety he entreated his co-operation in the execution of a scheme which materially involved his happiness. Jaques hesitated, and requested to be informed relative to what was in agitation. Conrad requested, and the former faithfully promised, secrecy, when he detailed the hope he had formed of the aid of Jaques towards rescuing his sister from her imprisonment. The latter, finding Conrad was acquainted with her existence, and, supposing he was conversing with the brother of Matilda, did not hesitate to inform him of the plan formed by himself and Arthur for her deliverance, imagining it would render its execution more certain. "The Lord

"Arthur!" vehemently uttered Conrad, half distracted with jealousy. "Yes," said Jaques, "the Lord Arthur," somewhat surprized at his impetuosity. Conrad, however, considering that by pretending to lend them assistance he might be enabled to defeat the intentions of Arthur, and bear off himself the lovely prize he was in search of, immediately recovering himself promised his cordial co-operation.

Jaques immediately flew to Arthur, and related to him the promise of assistance he had obtained from Conrad. Arthur, convinced of the difficulty attendant upon the scheme in agitation, was not now sorry, but rather rejoiced that the co-operation of so able an assistant had been obtained.

C H A P. IV.

THE Baron was now become in a great measure divested of his fear and of his agitation, as no attack had been made or attempted by the Baron de Montacute, or his adherents, and determined again to summon Matilda to his presence, and endeavour to undermine some strong hold in the citadel of her virtue. Repairing to that apartment, the sight of which constantly covered her cheeks with blushes, he sent for the lovely maid, who reluctantly appearing, he seized her hand, and seating her beside him, began by observing, "My lovely
G 3 " Matilda,

“ Matilda, your charms become more
 “ seductively attracting, every day of
 “ your existence.” Matilda replied, “ If
 “ sorrow and melancholy, my Lord, can
 “ heighten the effect of whatever small
 “ share of personal accomplishments I
 “ possess, it must be, no doubt, mate-
 “ rially increased.” “ Sorrow and me-
 “ lancholy, my dear girl, are not fit in-
 “ mates for your beauty, joy and glad-
 “ ness ought be its accompaniments, and
 “ love its effect.” “ When I have rea-
 “ son to rejoice my Lord, those accom-
 “ paniments will follow of course; but
 “ I cannot, nor will I attempt to put on
 “ the semblance of happiness, when my
 “ heart is torn with grief and despair.”
 Music now sounded, and a number of
 female voices warbled forth a variety of
 songs, all expressly calculated for the
 votaries of pleasure. Matilda frowned con-
 tempt

tempt upon the efforts made to amuse and ensnare her mind, and the disappointed Baron at length gave the signal to cease their exertions. Matilda, whose mind had been tortured rather than relieved, by the melting strains poured upon her ear, now requested permission to retire to her chamber. "Why my love," said the Baron, "are you so impatient to retire? when shall I be blest with a small portion of your favour and approbation?" The tears started into the eyes of Matilda, and she returned no answer. "You are silent, lovely Matilda," said the Baron; "do you then give me no hopes of obtaining a place in your affections?" "Restore me, my Lord, to those affections from which you have insidiously wrested me, and you will then become the object of my gratitude." "The ties

“ of affection you mention, my love,”
said the Baron, “ are snapt, they are
“ wholly extinct and obliterated.”——
“ How do you mean, my Lord?”——
“ Your parents and your brother, my
“ lovely Matilda, as well as my household
“ at this moment, believe you to be no
“ more, and have already paid the last
“ duties to your supposed remains.” The
shock had nearly overpowered the senses
of Matilda, and with difficulty she pre-
served herself from fainting, but some-
what recovering from her agitation, she
said, in faint but agonizing accents :
“ Depravity such as this, my Lord, I
“ could not have suspected to exist in
“ the heart of man.” “ Depravity, my
“ love, is a mere name, and what
“ you call depravity, I denominate a
“ legitimate pursuit after happiness,
“ which only exists in pleasing sensa-
“ tions.”

" tions." " How then, my Lord, can
 " you justify the depriving me of those
 " pleasing sensations, which according to
 " your own definition, constitute happi-
 " ness?" " No, my love, I wish to
 " confer upon you happiness, by adding
 " to the number of those sensations."—
 " Impossible, my Lord; you have de-
 " prived me of all that constituted my
 " happiness; and now wish to engraft
 " upon my mind the meretricious illusi-
 " ons and miseries of vice." Still dis-
 appointed and unsuccessful in all his efforts
 to proceed a single step in betraying the
 innocence of Matilda, he at length quit-
 ted her hand, and permitted her to re-
 tire.

She immediately repaired to her cham-
 ber, a prey to hopeless misery and despair.
 Her parents, her Conrad believed her
 dead, and no hope remained of succour

or deliverance, but perhaps it might be a scheme made use of by the Baron for the purposes of deception; but every thing was to be feared from his avowed depravity; and it was highly probable he had in reality carried into execution the fraud he had mentioned. She now appeared cut off for ever from the world, and him whom she most esteemed and ardently loved; and without any resource, by means of which she might again return to those pure pleasures, which had been her only comfort and consolation. Despairing of her deliverance, and dreading the machinations and the power of the Baron, she determined to blot herself from the page of existence, rather than submit to his libidinous desires. When in the dungeon she had accidentally laid her hand upon a dagger, and thinking it might be of use, had carefully concealed

it

it ever since; she now drew it from its concealment, and anxiously contemplated its appearance. It was yet bright, and did not seem to have been used. Matilda trembled as she held it, and already the thought agitated her mind of pointing it against herself. Struck with horror at the contemplation of suicide, she started and became appalled at the view of her own design;—still it hung upon her mind, and with agitated step she paced her chamber, and at length again sat down in an agony of grief, horror, and despair. Once more the thought of putting a period at once to her woes and her existence rushed into her mind, and again was driven from its post by returning sentiments of piety and religion. Terrified at her intention, she implored forgiveness, for having dared to form a design against that life she had no right

to dispose of; and at length somewhat relieved from her extreme perturbation of mind, she retired to her bed, and after passing several sleepless hours, sunk into a slumber, and dreamt she had crossed the moat which surrounded the castle, and was flying from it with the utmost expedition. The trepidation attendant upon her supposed flight awakened her; but the dream made an impression upon her mind, and she could not help thinking it might be a forewarning of her escape. Unable to obtain any farther sleep from the reflections which her dream had given rise to, she arose at the dawn of day, and contemplated for some time the prospect within her view, whilst the thought of again enjoying, in perfect freedom, all the beauties of nature, obtained full possession of her mind. She obeyed their summons

mons to breakfast, and then retiring to her apartment, as had been her constant custom until dinner, she reflected upon the circumstances of her dream, and at length resolved to descend to the door leading to the dungeons, and persist in remaining there for some time, hardly daring to expect, yet not without hope of some circumstance happening favourable to her deliverance.

With palpitating heart she repaired to the door, and anxiously waited a considerable time, whilst the sound of an unusual noise and bustle in the castle, frequently caused her to tremble with apprehension. At length she began to despair of meeting with any favorable occurrence, and considering her dream as a mere illusion of imagination, blamed herself for being so weak as to place confidence in its prediction.

At

At length she heard the sound of footsteps upon the stairs leading to the door; the palpitation of her heart increased, and trembling violently, she was compelled to support herself by leaning against the wall. The door was opened, and two men masked, and well armed, with each a lantern in his hand, entered the passage. Matilda was struck with terror, but yet imagining it might be her escape which was intended, she forebore to scream, and remained leaning against the wall unable to move.

The men who had entered advanced into the passage with the utmost caution, and proceeding a few steps, discovered Matilda. One of them started, and seemed to tremble at the sight, with an agitated manner he seized her hand, and pressed it as if he knew her well. She at first thought it might be a plot formed
by

by her tyrant for the purpose of her destruction; but the figure of the person who had seized her hand, and pressed it with so much ardor struck her, and tho' his face was entirely hid, she thought it was Conrad. The other who now advanced, and seized her other hand, she knew not, but at all events, she thought no change in her situation could be for the worse, and determined unresistingly to accompany them.

Neither uttered a word, but led her silently, after again locking the door, across the passage into which the stairs led them, into the adjoining parallel passage, and from thence into the next, where escorting her into the farthest dungeon, which she well remembered, and the sight of which recalled fearful recollections to her mind, one of them gave her a light, and in a low voice, which she thought founded

founded like that of Conrad, desired her to go in, and disguise herself in those male habiliments, which she would find provided there for her use.

Matilda now certainly concluding that her escape was intended, did not hesitate to obey the injunction she had received, and whilst they silently waited without, she entered the dungeon, and though still in a tremor, was not long in equipping herself in her intended disguise. Returning to her conductors, they led her in perfect silence to the door of the dungeons leading to the main body of the Castle, which having unlocked, she saw Jaques completely armed, standing before it. Alarmed and agitated she would have drawn back, but was fast held by one of her conductors: Jaques immediately called out, they were in danger, and pushing himself with all his force, against

against him whom she had imagined to be Conrad, they both descended the stairs together, with some degree of violence, whilst the other led her forward with rapid step, until they arrived at the staircase, up which, not long before, the Baron had insidiously conducted her to a detested prison.

She now became seriously alarmed, and her mind yielded to the most fearful conjectures. Hesitating she would have drawn back, but was prevented by her conductor, who in a low voice assured her, there was no ground for alarm, and that he was leading her to peace and safety.—Somewhat calmed by this assurance, she suffered herself to be led up the staircase with a little less reluctance than when artfully conducted by the Baron. He now led her through several apartments which she had never before seen, and
carefully

carefully locking the doors after him, at length to a chamber, where fastening the door, and inviting her to be seated, he seated himself by her side, and pulling off his mask, Matilda saw before her Arthur de Umfreville.

Astonishment and fear alternately swayed and agitated her mind; she recollected his address to her the day preceding that on which she had been ensnared by the Baron, and the interest he then seemed to take in her welfare; and concluding in the innocence of her heart, he entertained for her an honourable love, she lamented it was not in her power to bestow a return of affection upon the man who had so generously delivered her. But reflecting upon the scuffle that took place at the door leading out of the dungeons, and the subsequent disappearance of him whom she had supposed to be Conrad,
her

her fears were alarmed, and by no means lessened by the cautious manner in which she had been led to the chamber where she now found herself seated.

Arthur now broke the silence he had so long maintained by saying, "My
" lovely Matilda, you are at last safe from
" the detestable arts of my father, but,
" to ensure that safety, you must remain
" in my apartments until some plan can
" be thought of by means of which you
" may be finally removed from all dan-
" ger of again becoming a captive to his
" power. The thought of remaining in
the apartments of Arthur did not serve
to lessen those fears which had begun to
agitate her mind, it seemed as if she was
only destined to exchange one prison for
another; she immediately replied to his
address; "I presume, my Lord, my pa-
" rents, and my brother, may be per-
" mitted

“mitted to visit me in this new confinement.” — “Not for the world,” retorted the artful Arthur, “for then your escape would be blazed abroad, and, soon coming to the knowledge of the Baron, you would be reconveyed to your prison, and I should be doomed to destruction for promoting your flight.”

This conveyed no tidings of comfort to the mind of Matilda, and her situation seemed now worse than that she had escaped from; she eagerly asked, “Why could we not now have escaped from the castle?” — “That was impossible, my dear Matilda, my father being in its neighbourhood would have discovered our flight.” — “Was not that my brother, my Lord, who accompanied you to the East Tower, and has since disappeared.” Arthur was rather confused, but, recovering himself, replied,

“No,

“No, my dear Matilda, it was not your
“brother, but another person, whom I
“employed to assist me in promoting
“your escape.” But Matilda had observed his confusion, and it tended to confirm her fears of his sinister intentions.
“But make yourself easy, my lovely
“Matilda,” continued Arthur, “and in
“a short time you will be restored to
“your relatives, and all the enjoyments
“of perfect freedom.” Saying this he quitted the room, and Matilda, with fear and apprehension, heard him lock the door. She was now in a situation which again overwhelmed her with despair; she anxiously looked around the room, and, perceiving a door, opened it with palpitating eagerness, but it led only to a chamber of repose to which there was no other entry; she fled to the windows, and found she was on the same floor where
she

she had been situated in the East Tower, but on the other side of the castle. The casements, however, were not barred, and secluded like those in the tower, and she cherished a hope of being seen and known, and acquiring assistance, by which she might effect her escape.

We will there leave her for a moment, and recur to the means by which her escape from the East Tower was effected. Arthur, Conrad, and Jaques, having, after much discussion, jointly concerted together another plan for her rescue, in which it had been agreed she should be conveyed away from the castle with all expedition in the track pointed out by Conrad, and where he thought he should be fully enabled, in consequence of his knowledge of the road, to rescue her from Arthur, and bear away alone the lovely prize, together with all the merit
of

of assisting her flight. Arthur, however, knowing his own base designs, with which Conrad was unacquainted, and being aware that the presence of the latter would be an obstacle to their completion, concerted another plan with Jaques, to which Conrad was a stranger, for the purpose of conveying her to his apartments.

In pursuance of these schemes Arthur pretended extreme indisposition, and, confining himself closely to his chamber, gave out that he could not leave it without danger to his life. In the mean time, by their united efforts, a report was raised that the Baron de Montacute had collected together his retainers, and was marching for the purpose of revenging the defeat he had met with from Arthur. The Baron was considerably alarmed, and still more, when he heard from
Jaques,

Jaques, who took care to be in the way, that his son was extremely ill, and must not, upon any account, quit his chamber. No time was to be lost; Montacute was said to be fast advancing, and the Baron de Umfreville resolved to take the command himself of his retainers, and march forward to meet him. Taking with him the greater part of those within the castle, as, from the intelligence received, he did not fear a surprize, and summoning those without, who having been lately constantly in readiness, were soon enabled to join his standard, he commenced his march.

Jaques, as soon as his master was at some distance from the castle, dispatched the remaining retainers to form an ambuscade near a way on which he said a party was to march, for the purpose of surprizing it. The females were all employed

employed in their respective occupations, and, no obstruction remaining, Conrad and Arthur, disguised and masked, descended into the subterranean passages and led away Matilda from the East Tower. Conrad, who had been informed by Arthur that three horses were provided, at a short distance, to convey them on with more expedition, exulted as he ascended the stairs towards their final exit from the dreary apartments, in the prospect of his beloved Matilda's escape, and anticipated, with glowing satisfaction, the happiness he should experience in her company, when, having deceived Arthur, he should bear her away to some safe and concealed retreat.

It was now that the scheme of Arthur and Jaques, which was a secret to Conrad, was carried into execution; the moment they had opened the door, Arthur,

VOL. II.

H

who

who had unlocked it, stepped forward, holding Matilda by the hand, when Jaques, pretending danger, threw himself against Conrad, and forcing him, by the shock, to quit her other hand, which he had hitherto firmly and fondly held, they both, unable to stop themselves, descended together the stairs, with difficulty preserving themselves from falling, whilst Arthur locked the door, and proceeded with Matilda to his apartments.

Conrad, not having the least suspicion of treachery, concluded, when Jaques exclaimed danger, that there was, in reality, ground for apprehension, and considered the rude shock, given him by the latter, as a friendly violence. Recovering, however, from the effect of the shock, and perceiving no trace of Arthur or Matilda, and the door shut, he began to suspect he had been the victim of deception, and

and bitterly reproached Jaques for his treachery; but the latter, wishing to detain him there a little while, until Arthur could convey away Matilda, endeavoured to soothe him, and began to enter into a minute detail of the danger that awaited them. Conrad, however, thinking he perceived the drift of his discourse, insisted upon the door being opened, and Jaques, supposing there was now no fear of his discovering Arthur, complied with his demand.

The moment he was freed from his temporary imprisonment, taking off his mask, he fled, with the utmost rapidity, out of the castle gates, and determining to keep no measures with the perfidious Arthur, and to sacrifice him to his vengeance, whilst he rescued, by force, his beloved Matilda, he swiftly proceeded in the track they had agreed to pursue, but

no vestige of their flight was to be perceived. Amazed, and disappointed, he ran, with eager speed, a number of different ways, and ascended several eminences, where he anxiously looked around, but no trace of them was to be discovered.

In the mean time the Baron, unable to discover any embattled force in his way, or any traces of hostile preparation on the domains of his rival, began to suppose he had given him the slip, and knowing the defenceless state in which his castle had been left, hastened back, fearing a surprize. Astonished at seeing no enemy in his way, he redoubled his speed, and endeavoured to return a shorter road than that he had marched along from the castle. Arrived within a short distance of his mansion a body of men suddenly appeared in ambuscade; no
doubt

doubt was entertained of their being some of the adherents of the Baron de Montacute, and immediate preparations were made for an attack. Soon, however, recognizing each other, as friends, the amazement of the Baron was increased. He speedily advanced to the castle gate, and finding no one there began to fear the castle had been sacked and plundered in his absence, and that it was to obtain an opportunity for doing this that the report of the Baron de Montacute's advancing was raised as a feint; a supposition that was not a little confirmed by the sound of deep groans, which immediately struck the ears of the Baron and those who entered with him.

Considerably agitated, he listened for a while, and finding at length they proceeded from the passage leading towards the dungeons, the Baron immediately re-

paired thither, with his sword drawn, accompanied by a detachment of his retainers strongly armed, and, to his no small astonishment, saw, upon his arrival, Jaques lying upon the ground, from whose mouth issued those dreadful groans by which he had been agitated and his party alarmed.

Advancing towards his domestic he raised him up, with the assistance of some of his attendants, and eagerly enquired into the cause of his groans; but Jaques pointed to the gag that prevented him from speaking, which, when the astonished Baron had himself removed, and again with the most eager anxiety repeated his question, Jaques, after a great number of lamentations and expressions of pain, endeavoured to answer him: "An please your Lordship," said Jaques, "as I was standing guard at the door
" here,

“ here, two men, in masks, terrible look-
“ ing figures, came into the passage, all of
“ a sudden, my Lord, and having gagged
“ and beat me, till I could not stir, please
“ your Lordship, one of them staid be-
“ hind to guard me, and the other got
“ hold of my keys, and went down into
“ the dungeon, my Lord; so presently
“ he came back again and brought some-
“ body with him, who it was, my Lord,
“ I don’t know, but I shouldn’t at all
“ wonder if it was Pierre or Marianne
“ whom they have rescued; one of them
“ stood over me with a large sword, and
“ threatened to sheathe it in my body
“ if I stirred, and when they had done
“ what they wanted, they threw the keys
“ at me with great force, and hit me
“ a hard blow on the head with them,
“ which quite stunned me, and I did not

H 4

“ recover

“recover my senses till just before your
“ Lordship came here.”

The Baron was totally at a loss to account for the strange story he had heard from the mouth of Jaques, and giving the keys to two of the retainers commanded them to descend, and observe whether Pierre and Marianne were in their respective dungeons. The domestics soon returned with an answer in the affirmative, and he now certainly concluded that Jaques must have been seized with a sudden fit of insanity, and the story of the men in the masks was one of the reveries of his distempered imagination.

He immediately ordered Jaques to be conveyed to his apartment, and every necessary assistance rendered to him. All the retainers of his household being now
arrived,

arrived, every thing in the castle was found in its proper place, and no sign of an enemy having been there, an appearance which confirmed the conclusion he had formed relative to the sudden insanity of Jaques; but the gag, which was actually upon his mouth overturned the conclusion the Baron had triumphantly arrived at, and ascending to his apartment, he mused deeply upon the relation of Jaques, but was wholly unable to assign a rational cause to such an effect.

Jaques had recourse to this scheme, that his assistance, in the flight of Matilda, when discovered, should not be suspected, nor any suspicion rest upon those who were actually concerned.

Fears of the most horrid kind now agitated the mind of Conrad, and swelling with rage at the treachery of which he had been the victim, he ran back to the

H 5

castle,

castle, and proceeding directly to the door of the dungeon, he found Jaques was not there; flying immediately to his apartment, where he was surprised to find him in bed, he seized him by the throat, and brandishing his dagger, threatened him with instant death, if he did not immediately say where Matilda had been conveyed. Jaques terrified at the menace, but still desirous of keeping the secret, attempted to prevaricate, but Conrad enraged almost to madness, was not to be trifled with. He already moved the dagger towards him, and Jaques terrified at the thought of losing his life, at last told him she had been conveyed by the Lord Arthur to his own apartments.

Conrad immediately seizing a sword flew, regardless of danger, to the apartments of Arthur, where knocking loudly

at

at the door, it was opened by the latter, supposing it to be one of his attendants. Conrad immediately rushed in, and laying his hand upon his sword, demanded Matilda. Arthur was rather alarmed at his abrupt appearance; but affecting surprise, denied all knowledge of her place of concealment; and was about to detail a made up story of her being rescued from him by the satellites of the Baron, and himself in imminent danger; but Conrad sternly interrupted him, and said, "Lord
" Arthur, there is no necessity for you
" to degrade yourself by deceit; your
" accomplice Jaques reluctantly, com-
" pelled by the fear of death, has reveal-
" ed to me the circumstance, and I know
" she is here." The resoluteness of manner displayed by Conrad, and the courage which Arthur was well aware he
H 6 possessed,

possessed, intimidated the latter, and with a soft politeness he said, "Conrad, you
" are in the wrong to be so boisterously
" unruly in demanding your sister, know-
" ing your impetuosity, I had her con-
" veyed here, on purpose that she might
" not be involved in danger from its ef-
" fects. You must be aware of the im-
" portance which rests upon her escape
" being kept a secret, until a flight from
" the Castle shall be adviseable; and
" upon mature consideration, to fly at
" present from it, appeared to be an en-
" terprize pregnant with danger, and
" therefore I resolved upon this as a
" substitute; but there was not time for
" me to make your impetuosity bend to
" its policy, and therefore I was compel-
" led to have recourse to the method I
" adopted."

Some-

Something seemed to lurk beneath this plausible argument, which added to Arthur's denial of the fact, and attempt at prevarication were by no means satisfactory to Conrad, who resolutely demanded to be led immediately to his sister; a request which Arthur did not wish to grant, and knew not how to deny. At length, intimidated by the resolute sternness of Conrad, and wholly ignorant of his being the lover, instead of the brother of Matilda, he acceded to his request, and leading him to the apartment where she was, shut the door and locked him in, informing him he would let him out upon his making an agreed upon signal for that purpose.

The surprise of Matilda may be more easily conceived than expressed, at seeing her beloved Conrad enter her apartment,
after

after the conversation that had passed between her and Arthur, whom she even again imagined to have been her generous deliverer, and that she was only detained here as a measure of precaution to ensure her safety.

Conrad advanced towards her with a cautious air, and seizing her hand, with a low and tremulous voice said, "O my
" Matilda, how have you been betrayed,
" treachery reigns throughout this detestable mansion ;" and still lowering his voice said, "let us fly from it with eager
" haste and impetuous speed, to some
" sequestered spot, where we may pass
" together the remainder of our lives in
" peace and content." Matilda now recovered a little from the agitation into which his sudden and unexpected appearance had thrown her, replied, "O
" Conrad,

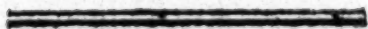
“ Conrad, I will encounter, with pleasure, every difficulty and danger that presents itself, if I can but escape with you from this hateful castle.” Conrad looked cautiously around, and was much afraid of being overheard; advancing to the windows, and trying them, he rejoiced at finding the means of escape, and immediately proposed to his Matilda to scale them in the night, and conveying her away, they might be out of all danger from pursuit, before her escape was discovered.

Matilda eagerly acceded to the proposal, and agreed to be upon the watch, and ready to accompany him at the appointed hour. She now detailed to him all the misery she had suffered since they last met, and the suspicions she entertained of the intentions of Arthur. These
suspicions

suspensions the relation of Conrad served to confirm in her own mind, and they mutually congratulated each other upon the success with which the insidious Arthur had been in turn deceived, and the near prospect of their deliverance. An interchange of the tenderest sentiments of love succeeded, and the moments passed swiftly away, until Arthur became quite impatient at the long stay of Conrad, and unlocking the door, entered the room.

Conrad hearing the key turned immediately became silent, and walking to the window was standing there when Arthur entered the room. The latter immediately addressing himself to Conrad said, "I hope you are now sensible of
" the necessity of your sister's staying in
" my apartments, until the ardor of pursuit is cooled, and of a strict secrecy
" being

“ being observed relative to the place of
“ her concealment.” Conrad who had
settled with Matilda their plan of escape,
did not hesitate to accede to the truth of
his rival’s propositions, and uttering a
farewell to his supposed sister, retired
from the room, and was escorted by Ar-
thur to the staircase.



C H A P. V.

THE hour of dinner in the Eastern Tower having arrived, one of the females repaired to the door of Matilda's apartment for the purpose of summoning her to their repast. Receiving no answer after repeatedly knocking, she opened the door, which was not locked, and went into the room. Alarmed at not seeing Matilda, she hastened to the apartment where her companions were assembled, and informed them of the event.

A search was immediately instituted, which was of course fruitless; and observing the bolts of the door leading to the

the dungeons pushed back, it was unanimously concluded she must have escaped that way, though by what means could not be suggested.

Terrified at her flight, no one dared to go into the presence of the Baron to inform him of the event, and after much fearful consultation, it was determined to proceed in a body to their Lord, for the purpose of making him acquainted with it, as he must at all events soon know the circumstance.

In pursuance of this resolution, they repaired to his apartment, and requested to be admitted to his presence. The Baron, amazed at such a request, immediately complied, and was then informed of the escape of Matilda.

The tale related by Jaques concerning the men masked, who had forcibly entered the dungeons, now forcibly rushed upon
his

his mind, and he doubted not they had carried off Matilda instead of Pierre or Marianne, according to the supposition of his domestic. Now he found too surely every resource of pursuit cut off, for the story of her death being circulated and universally believed, and imagining as he did, that no one but himself and the females in the East Tower knew of her existence, he could not employ any agent to pursue her, without making discoveries which would have exhibited his character in so dark a shade as to make him recoil with horror at its contemplation.

He paced his apartment agitated with the most gloomy fears, and now his suspicion rested upon the Baron de Montacute, now upon Jaques, then upon Conrad, and then upon his son, until quite bewildered in dark conjectures which rent his mind, but enabled him to
fix

fix upon no point from whence he could begin to develope the mystery which surrounded him; he at length suspected every one, and fancying himself universally betrayed, in a fit of suspicious gloom he descended to the Castle gates, and, ordering the bridge to be drawn up, locked them fast, and taking the key with him to his apartment, refused either entrance or exit to any person whatever.

The domestics now thought their master was actually mad, and loudly murmured at being made prisoners within the Castle walls. Arthur and Jaques guessed the reason. The latter still kept his bed under the pretence of being very ill from the effect of the blows he had received. Conrad likewise concluded the cause, but, now in despair, saw all his hopes of delivering his beloved Matilda at once dashed to the ground. He was now
himself

himself a prisoner at large in the Castle, along with the other retainers, and a constant guard being kept at the entrance into the dungeons, which was close to the private door, he could not attempt to go out thence without being immediately discovered, and his design completely frustrated.

Arthur, after escorting Conrad to the stairs, immediately returned to Matilda, and related a wondrous detail of the hot pursuit that was now instituted in consequence of her flight, and promising her safety and protection in his apartments. Matilda, whose mind was occupied with her expected escape, slightly thanked him. Not discouraged by her coolness, he continued, "My lovely Matilda, your charms
" have inspired me with the most ardent
" love: from the peculiar circumstances
" in which I am at present placed, I have
" it

“ it not in my power to offer you a title
“ and a fortune, but if you will consent
“ to a private marriage, and to live here
“ in the utmost privacy and secrecy, at
“ my father’s death, which most pro-
“ bably will not be far distant, I shall
“ take a pride in introducing you as the
“ Baroness de Umfreville.” Matilda,
from what had been told her by Conrad,
added to her own previous suspicions,
suspected the snare, but supposing she
should be very shortly released from her
present confinement, was only solicitous
to gain time, and replied, “ I will con-
“ sider, my Lord, of your proposal, and
“ return an answer in a few days.” Ar-
thur was delighted with the success which
he now imagined had attended his insidi-
ous offer, but his impatience brooked not
delay, and he said, “ A few days, my
“ angel! Do you consider what an age a
“ day

“ day is to an expecting lover ?” Matilda immediately replied, “ Perhaps, my “ Lord, I may give you an answer to- “ morrow.” Arthur seized her hand to convey it to his lips, but she gently pulled it away, and not wishing to offer her the slightest offence, he respectfully retired, and repaired to his apartment in extasy at the success of his scheme, and determined to keep her secluded from all external intercourse, and not again to admit her supposed brother, whose courage and penetration he feared.

The Baron in the mean time could form no determination relative to the conduct he ought to pursue. He was afraid of instituting a pursuit ; and, from the tale related by Jaques, was convinced she could not be in the dungeons below, in which the horrors he had experienced when searching for her before still appear-
ed

ed in fearful recollection, and filled him with the utmost terror at the thought of again descending into them ; but in what manner the strange men could enter the East Tower, and carry her off without the knowledge of the other females there, was to him an inexplicable mystery.

Ordering a double guard to be stationed at the dungeon door, and a strict watch kept at the Castle gate, he retired for the night, absorbed in melancholy and apprehension, in doubt and fear,—whilst Conrad, maddening at the approach of night, paced his apartment with blackest melancholy upon his brow, and could form no plan, in the execution of which he might derive even the most distant hope of delivering his beloved Matilda. In the tempest of his mind he half determined to knock down the guards at the entrance of the dungeons, and drag-

ging them out at the private door, prevent them from giving any alarm by locking it upon them; but a double guard was stationed there, and the madness of the attempt appeared too glaring. Thus bereft of every hope of effecting his purpose, he paced his room for a considerable time nearly distracted, and at length, quite exhausted, threw himself upon the bed, and sunk into a troubled sleep.

Matilda was wholly ignorant of the household having been made prisoners by their master, and sat at the window of her apartment anxiously expecting the appearance of Conrad. Hour after hour passed away, and her alarm and agitation became extreme;—perhaps the assistance he had rendered her in her escape had been discovered, and he immured in a dungeon, and destined to be sacrificed to
the

the insatiate vengeance of the Baron—dreadful thought! Perhaps too, he might be put to the torture to compel him to discover the place of her concealment. She trembled violently at the forebodings of her imagination, and the dawn of day that had frequently inspired her with cheerfulness and joy, now filled her with the most dreadful apprehensions.

Pale and melancholy from the anxiety and perturbation of her mind, and exhausted by want of rest, she called the female attendant, whom Arthur, with the assistance of Jaques, had provided for her, and charged her to tell the Lord Arthur of her extreme indisposition, and retired to her chamber to obtain a little rest. But the agitation of her mind allowed not of sleep, and after a few broken slumbers she arose scarcely refreshed, and proceeded to the adjoining apartment

where she had so anxiously waited the preceding night the appearance of Conrad.

She had not been long here before Arthur, who had been alarmed at hearing of her indisposition, entered the room. Her pallid countenance, and the diminished lustre of her eye sufficiently displayed her illness. "I was extremely sorry, " my lovely Matilda," said Arthur, "to " hear of your indisposition, but I hope " you now feel yourself recovering." "I am obliged to your Lordship," said Matilda, whilst the tear started into her eye, "I am considerably better." "You " promised me, my angel," said Arthur, "to-day an answer to my proposal." "Excuse me, my Lord," said Matilda, still aiming to gain time, "my indispo- " sition has prevented me from giving " the subject that consideration its impor-
" tance

“tance demands, and I must beg leave
“to delay my reply.” Arthur was impatient to carry into effect the insidious scheme he had formed, but could not press Matilda for an answer, indisposed as she still seemed to be, and therefore again retired to his own apartment. Matilda, when he was retiring from the room, said, “I hope, my Lord, I may be permitted
“to see my brother again to-day.” To this Arthur assented, but was very far from intending to comply with her request.

Matilda waited some time in anxious expectation of seeing Conrad enter the room, but disappointed in this also, the most dismal fears crowded upon her mind, and proceeding to one of the windows, she stood fixed there for several hours in hopes of observing him.

Conrad was equally anxious to converse

with his beloved Matilda, and account to her for the disappointment she had experienced the preceding night, and ascended for that purpose to the apartments of Arthur. But the latter had taken effectual precautions against the intrusion of so unwelcome a visitor. One of his attendants met Conrad in an antichamber, and informed him his master was much indisposed, and must not be disturbed. Unheeding, however, such a relation, which he conceived to be merely a pretext, he eagerly endeavoured to obtain admission, but in vain; the doors were fast, and no answer given to his repeated calls. At length he was compelled to retire, and proceeding to his apartment, yielded himself up a prey to silent despair.

The Baron, whose waking thoughts and sleeping dreams during the whole night had been directed to the same point, the discovery
of

of the means by which the escape of Matilda had been effected, arose in the morning with his mind full of the same ideas. The morning being fine, he determined to ride ; but now, suspicious of every one, he would not trust the key of the Castle gates out of his possession, and giving notice he should confine his ride to the immediate environs of his mansion, he ordered his household to make a certain signal in case there should arise any necessity for opening them, upon sight of which he would immediately return.

The domestics murmured, and ventured to remonstrate, but the Baron was absolute, and, harshly interdicting all complaint, taking a few attendants with him, he locked the gates, and began his excursion.

The Baron, riding about his Castle in different directions, still keeping at a short

distance from it, at length rode very near that part of it where his son's apartments were situated. Accidentally looking up, a female figure bearing a great resemblance to Matilda caught his eye. He looked again with a more keen gaze, and was convinced it was her. Foaming with rage, and distracted with jealousy, he impetuously rode to the Castle gates, and entering his mansion, and proceeding to his apartment, was about indignantly to summon his son to his presence, when Arthur stood before him.

Arthur was ignorant of his father's excursion, and had not the least expectation of his quitting the Castle, and struck with surprise at seeing him before the windows of his apartments, immediately ran to that occupied by Matilda, to warn her from going near the windows, but it was too late. He had no sooner entered

entered the room than he saw her standing at the window, and his father gazing eagerly upon her. Matilda, whose mind was absorbed in the contemplation of the danger in which Conrad was probably involved, did not at first see him. When he was looking at her the second time, her eyes met his, and in the utmost confusion and affright she retired from the window without perceiving Arthur, who had just before entered the room, and now struck with terror at the probable effects of his father's rage, immediately took his resolution, and as soon as the Baron entered his apartment was there likewise.

Before the Baron could open his mouth, Arthur began, "Pray, my Lord," said he, "has any female escaped from the "East Tower lately?" The Baron, whose anger had boiled to the highest pitch, was surprised at the question asked at

such a critical moment, and looking at his son for some time, at length demanded in turn, "Why do you ask the question?" "Because, my Lord," replied Arthur, "a day or two ago, when you was absent with the retainers, leading them against the Baron de Montacute, I was standing at the Castle gate, being then much indisposed, and having walked there for the sake of a little exercise and air, two men masked suddenly stood by my side, and giving a female into my care, immediately disappeared. It seemed a very strange circumstance, and not knowing who she was, I conveyed her to my apartments, where she has been ever since; but from some words dropt by her to-day, I was induced to think she had escaped from the East Tower." The Baron was highly pleased with the ignorance pretended by his

his

his son concerning the person of Matilda, and from the agreement of the latter's relation with the tale of Jaques, he became convinced of the reality of the rescue, and concluded the men in masks had mistaken Arthur for an accomplice, and thus entrusted Matilda to his care. Exulting in the consequence of their supposed mistake, he immediately said to his son, "She has been rescued from the East Tower, and in a manner I am at a loss to account for." Arthur immediately said, "I will lead her to you, my Lord, directly;" and immediately flew to his apartments to prepare the unfortunate Matilda for a return to her prison; the Baron, eager to recover her, walked as fast as he could after him.

Arthur repaired swiftly to her chamber, and seizing her hand, informed her in a few words of what he had told the Baron,

and added, "Your brother and me are safe, and our scheme undiscovered, do not betray us." The sight of the Baron, and now the near prospect of again returning to her dreadful prison, caused a trembling agitation which had nearly overpowered the lovely unfortunate, and with difficulty could Arthur preserve her from falling to the ground. But his last words still vibrated upon her ear, and the safety of Conrad conveyed a delicious sensation to her bosom, which served to alleviate a small part of the pangs she now felt.

The Baron arrived at his son's apartments, and met him conducting Matilda scarcely alive through them. He immediately seized her hand, and conducting her to his apartments, before he led her again to her prison, began to interrogate her concerning the manner of her escape ;
she

she recollected the words of Arthur, that Conrad was safe and the scheme undiscovered, and took care to re-echo the tale of the men masked, and of her being delivered to the care of Arthur de Umfreville, adding that she was carried off without her consent.

The tale of the forcible entry made by the men in masks, was now so strongly supported that the Baron no longer hesitated to believe, and was only at a loss to account for the manner in which it had been done, and the cause of the attempt. Matilda seeing him absorbed in reverie, thought it a good opportunity to retire, and he did not oppose her retreat.

Repairing to her chamber, she felicitated herself upon the safety which she was taught to believe was enjoyed by Conrad, and though immersed in woe,
still

woe, still cherished the hope of again escaping, in consequence of the deception that had been played off upon the Baron, who supposing her to have been the victim of force, rather than the willing partner of those by whom she had been rescued, did not attempt to confine her, but trusted to the strong guard he had stationed, to prevent another attempt of the like nature.

Pierre and Marianne, during the continual hurry and agitation in which the Baron had lately been plunged, were nearly forgotten; he now however, resolved, by putting them to the torture, to endeavour to learn something which might tend to elucidate the conspiracy that appeared to have been formed for the purpose of carrying off Matilda, and ordered them to be brought before him.

Trembling they appeared, and the Ba-

ron

ron summoning all his domestics before his tribunal, again interrogated the culprits concerning the conspiracy in which they had been accomplices. Each truly denied all knowledge of what was laid to their charge; and the enraged Baron ordered the instruments of torture to be made ready. Marianne screamed and fainted at the sound, and Pierre trembling fell upon his knees, and solemnly protested he was innocent of what was imputed to him.

Recollecting the note, the Baron pulled it from his pocket, and giving it unto Jaques, ordered him to hand it round to all the domestics present, that they might declare their knowledge, or ignorance of the hand-writing. One of them, who happened accidentally to have seen some of the writing of Conrad, said
he

he believed it to have been written by him.

The name forcibly struck the mind of the Baron, and turning to Colin, who was present, he demanded in tones of anger, "Is this the hand-writing of your son?" Colin afraid of being involved in the storm that seemed now to be gathering around the devoted head of Conrad, immediately replied, "Please your Lordship he is not my son." "Not your son!" returned the Baron, and a thousand fearful apprehensions darted at once into his mind. "No, my Lord," continued Colin, "He came accidentally to my cottage, a little before I came here, and wishing to journey here along with me, it was agreed he should pass for my son."—The Baron now at once saw the extent of the deception, of which he had been the dupe, and immediately sent

sent one party of domestics to make him prisoner, whilst others searched his room, and brought to their master whatever was found there.

Conrad had locked himself up in his room, to partake in silent sadness of the luxury of woe, when the domestics arrived; and their master's commands admitting not of delay, they immediately broke open the door, and a number of them held him fast, whilst the others commenced a search in his apartment.

He now concluded his efforts for the deliverance of Matilda had been discovered, and that he was to answer for them with his life. Despairing, as he now did, of her release, life was become a burden, and he contemplated even, with some joy, the prospect of a speedy dissolution. Careless of what was to become of him, he said not a word, and gloomily looked
on,

on, whilst those employed in the search, assiduously pursued their intent, and soon discovered the mask he had worn when traversing the subterranean passages, with palpitating eagerness to deliver his Matilda, and the keys which Arthur had formerly given him, when they were unitedly pursuing the same design.

The domestics who had found them, immediately carried in triumph the mask and the keys to the Baron, whilst as he had given no orders for Conrad to be brought before him, the others remained holding him securely a prisoner.

Arthur who was now in the room, and had learnt with fearful astonishment, that Conrad was not the brother of Matilda, turned pale at the sight of the mask and the keys, and trembled lest he himself should be involved in the terrible effects of his father's rage.

The

The Baron, at the sight of what was brought to him by his domestics, immediately perceived that Conrad was one of those who had assisted Matilda, but anxiously eager to know who had joined him, and trembling with rage at the same time, a prey to all the maddening tortures of jealousy, was about to order him to be brought before his tribunal; but recollecting the secret of her existence, and afraid of its becoming exposed to his domestics, he hesitated, when Arthur perceiving his own life to be suspended by a thread, and tremblingly afraid that if Conrad was brought into the presence of the Baron, himself would be impeached, and involved in equal danger, whilst he maddened with rage against his rival, by whom he considered himself to have been duped, immediately interfered: "There cannot be the least doubt, my Lord,"

said

said Arthur, "that Conrad is the traitor
" who forcibly entered the dungeons,
" and rescued the female, whom he ignorantly entrusted to my care. As to
" the aid he received, it is of no consequence, his assistant was most probably
" only an innocent instrument for his
" designs, and the guilt of Conrad is so
" apparent, that I humbly submit, my
" Lord, it would be only a mockery to
" institute a trial for its discovery."

Influenced, in some measure, by his son's harangue, but still more by the fear of exposing to his domestics the black villainy of his conduct, he formed the horrid resolution of confining Conrad in the dungeon beneath the West Tower, which was universally believed to be haunted, and where no human being had set his foot for years past, and giving him some provisions, leave him there,
until

until he determined by what means his destruction, which he now resolved upon, should be accomplished.

He immediately imparted to those around him, the former part of his resolution, whilst he carefully concealed the latter, and giving to his son the key of the door that led to the subterraneous apartments beneath the Western Tower, commanded him to carry Conrad thither, and, leaving him provisions for several days, carefully lock the door and bring back the key to him.

Arthur, though hardened in depravity, was at a loss how to execute the orders of his father. He feared to face the man whom he had so cruelly deceived and injured, and at length determined to send forward the domestics with him, and commanding them to place him in the caverns destined for his residence,

residence, whilst himself followed at a distance, and having seen him carried down carefully locked the door; having thus determined, he immediately withdrew to execute his father's commands.

Marianne, who had recovered in time to hear the circumstances of the charge against Conrad, now perceived the means of exculpating herself, and immediately said, "I now know, please your Lordship, that Conrad was the person who carried me off from the East Tower by mistake, and, in endeavouring to return, I was seized by the Baron de Montacute." This appeared so highly probable, from every circumstance, that the Baron did not hesitate to believe it, and, releasing her from her present imprisonment, led her himself to her old apartments.

Pierre alone remained, who attributing

ing his imprisonment to Jaques, for the purpose of putting him out of the way, that the latter might execute some scheme he had formed, immediately began to accuse him of being an accomplice with Conrad in his crimes; but his accusations, being vague and unsupported, gained no credit with his master, though they served to infuse fresh suspicions into his breast. The conspiracy was now, in a great measure, developed, though some circumstances relative to it still remained a mystery which the Baron was at a loss to penetrate. There was no evidence, however, against Pierre, except the pretended discoveries of Jaques; but from what had been told him, by that domestic, he supposed that Pierre knew of, or suspected, the existence of Matilda, and he determined to prevent him from communicating with the rest of the household,

hold, by still confining him in the dungeon to which he was now remanded.

The domestics, in the mean time, except Jaques, who still pretended to be ill, and confined to his chamber, and Colin, who sorrowfully retired to his apartment, went in a body to a door which led out of the main body of the castle to the dungeon beneath the West Tower, and the key of which Arthur, who followed at a distance, and fearfully kept out of sight of Conrad, whom they hurried along, had given to one of the retainers. Arrived at the door, he who had the key in his possession feared to open it, and the rest stood trembling without, not daring to move; Conrad, who had hitherto preserved an indignant silence, now took advantage of the fearful suspense that had taken place, and called out, with a loud voice, "Matilda

" is

“ is still alive, and confined within the
“ walls of this castle.”

Not a few who were present imagined the voice to proceed from the depth of the caverns in which they were about to immerse Conrad a forlorn and unhappy prisoner, and it penetrated all with fearful dismay. Arthur became alarmed at the delay which had ensued, and at the effect which the short but forcible harangue of Conrad might possibly have upon the minds of those who surrounded him. He did not dare to sound his voice loud upon their ears, and at length whispered one of the retainers that the Baron was approaching, and would infallibly punish their delay in the execution of his commands. The whisper ran from ear to ear, and a general alarm ensued, which reaching the person who had possession of the key, he at length, trembling with

fear, opened the door, and along with those who accompanied him instinctively started back; many were firmly persuaded they had seen a spectre upon the stairs, and it was only the fear of the Baron's approach, which Arthur industriously circulated from his concealment, that induced those who held Conrad, fearfully to descend into the gloomy mansions, whilst another conveyed thither the provisions intended for him.

A sudden fear seized them upon the stairs, and, pushing Conrad to a considerable distance, they dropped the provisions, and hastily returned, pale and trembling with fear, whilst Arthur instantly flew to the door and locked it fast. He immediately conveyed the key to his father, who seizing it with eagerness, instantly fixed his determination that the unfortunate Conrad should never
more

more retrace his steps from the gloom and darkness in which he was now involved.

Arthur having retired, and the Baron being, in some measure, relieved from the terror to which he had lately been a victim, retired to the apartment devoted to his pleasures, and sent for Matilda, who was yet ignorant of the dreadful danger that now environed her Conrad, whom she fondly fancied was still safe, and his efforts made for her deliverance remaining undiscovered. The Baron, convinced of the potency of his rival's spells upon the affections of Matilda, was eager to triumph over her distress, and emphatically and ironically said, "My lovely
" Matilda, you may now be at ease for
" the remainder of your life, your brother will make no further attempt to
" rescue you from my arms."

K 2

Matilda

Matilda was alarmed at his expression, but imagining it was only a concerted plan, insidiously to obtain from her a confession of the real circumstances attendant upon her escape, immediately said, "My brother, my Lord, was wholly "unconcerned in my rescue."—"Yes, "my love," said the Baron, "I know "he was; it was your lover that led you "unreluctant away." A thunderbolt could not have given a greater shock to the unfortunate Matilda; she looked upon the Baron with wild affright, and her convulsive trembling penetrating him with fear, he started from his seat, and was about to summon assistance, when a flood of tears came to her relief, and, in some measure, eased the acuteness of her anguish.

Her tears he enjoyed, whilst at the same time they conveyed rage to his mind,

mind, at the love for his detested rival, to which they must be attributed. Matilda wept with unceasing grief; all the dangers, in which her beloved Conrad was now probably involved, crowded thick upon her mind, and she already saw him, in imagination, racked with the most cruel torments, and expiring a sacrifice to love. The imaginary sight almost overpowered her tender frame, and, kneeling at the feet of the Baron, she piteously implored his mercy for her beloved Conrad. The charms which shone through her distress delighted and inflamed his imagination, whilst her piteous intreaties, for his rival, impregnated his bosom with maddening jealousy.

The thought of making her love subservient to his desires now darted into his mind, and raising her from the ground, he said, "Yes, my lovely Matilda, the

“ means of saving the life of Conrad are
“ in your own power.” “ O name them,
“ my Lord!” said Matilda with trembling
eagerness. “ If he is at all dear to you”
said the Baron, hesitating, “ you will not
“ make the least objection to use them.”
Matilda now suspected his intentions, and
listened in silent despair. He paused and
hesitated, whilst Matilda remained in pal-
pitating suspense; at length, he broke
the silence, and said, “ Let the enjoyment
“ of your charms be my recompence,
“ and the life of your Conrad shall be
“ preserved.” Matilda started with hor-
ror at the proposal, and indignantly re-
plied, “ Conrad would die rather than
“ purchase life at the expence of my dis-
“ honour, and I should disgrace him by
“ accepting so base a proposal.” “ Then,
“ Matilda,” said the Baron, whilst rage
sparkled in his eyes, “ you have sealed
“ his

“his doom.” Indignant at his base and dishonourable offer, she disdained to implore again her haughty and merciless tyrant, even for the life of Conrad, and replied to the taunt of the Baron: “If
“he must die, my Lord, he will meet
“death amid the consciousness of virtue,
“and shall not be long survived by the
“sorrowing partner of his love, whilst
“remorse will tear the hearts of our per-
“secutors, and render misery their daily
“portion.” The reply of Matilda struck a dagger into his mind; he too fearfully experienced the remorse she had portrayed, and unable to appease the terror with which her answer had inspired him, permitted her to retire to her apartment.

Determining no longer to implore compassion from the man she detested, but treat him with repulsive contempt, Matilda repaired to her chamber, and,
locking

locking the door, threw herself into a chair, a prey to all the horrors of the most gloomy despair, and with a fixed purpose of never again departing from the room where she sat. The figure of Conrad appeared to her imagination, pallid and ghastly, bleeding at every pore, from the tortures inflicted by the merciless satellites of the Baron, and, fixing his hollow eyes upon her, expiring in her sight. She screamed with terror, and hastily rising from her chair, could scarcely believe it was only the illusion of fancy. Again he appeared, and seemed to plead in the agonies of pain and distress, for her to save his life by accepting the base proposal of the Baron. Melted by his intreaties, she was about to fly to her tyrant, and offer herself a willing victim to preserve the life of the dear object of her affections. Returning reason called her back,

back, and the pride of virtue looked down with detestation and contempt upon the act. Piety, "meek-eyed maid," now came to her relief, and looking forward to an union with her Conrad, where no crimes could endanger their happiness, and no evils infest their peace, she became gradually resigned to her fate; and, conscious of virtue and innocence, viewed with calm exultation her removal from a scene of misery and trouble.

END OF VOL. II.

locking the door, threw herself into a chair, a prey to all the horrors of the most gloomy despair, and with a fixed purpose of never again departing from the room where she sat. The figure of Conrad appeared to her imagination, pallid and ghastly, bleeding at every pore, from the tortures inflicted by the merciless satellites of the Baron, and, fixing his hollow eyes upon her, expiring in her sight. She screamed with terror, and hastily rising from her chair, could scarcely believe it was only the illusion of fancy. Again he appeared, and seemed to plead in the agonies of pain and distress, for her to save his life by accepting the base proposal of the Baron. Melted by his intreaties, she was about to fly to her tyrant, and offer herself a willing victim to preserve the life of the dear object of her affections. Returning reason called her back,

back, and the pride of virtue looked down with detestation and contempt upon the act. Piety, "meek-eyed maid," now came to her relief, and looking forward to an union with her Conrad, where no crimes could endanger their happiness, and no evils infest their peace, she became gradually resigned to her fate; and, conscious of virtue and innocence, viewed with calm exultation her removal from a scene of misery and trouble.

END OF VOL. II.



